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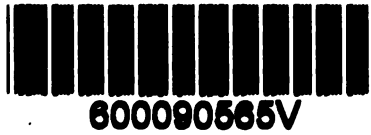
CHRISTIANITY IN EARNEST.

A. STEELE.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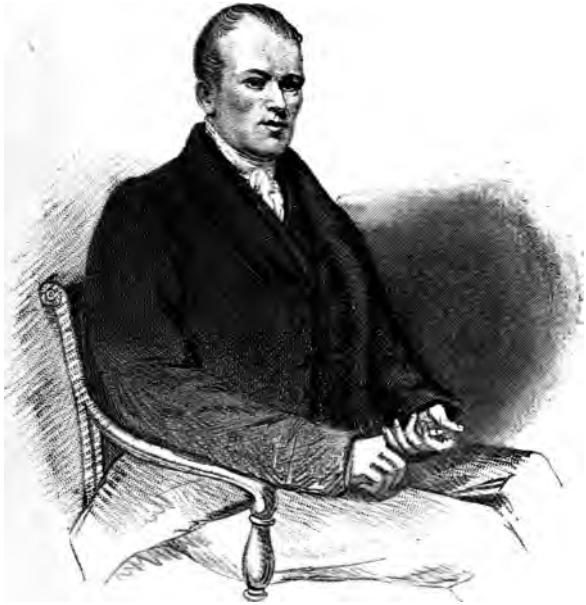

Yours most affly
on the Kings Highway to Glory
Hodgson Casson

CHRISTIANITY IN EARNEST,

AS EXEMPLIFIED IN

THE LIFE AND LABOURS

OF THE

REV. HODGSON CASSON.

BY

A. STEELE.

"IN LABOURS MORE ABUNDANT."

Tenth Thousand.

LONDON:
CHARLES H. KELLY, 2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD.;
AND 66, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1881.

HAYMAN, CHRISTY AND LILLY, LTD.,
PRINTERS,
HATTON WORKS, 113, FARRINGDON ROAD,
AND 20, 22, ST. BRIDE ST., E.C.

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MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. HODGSON CASSON.

CHAPTER I

HIS EARLY LIFE AND CONVERSION.

"THERE is a great diversity of character among real Christians. Education, constitution, and circumstances will fully explain this diversity. Some men are born minute men: they will hunt through libraries to rectify a syllable. Other men are born keen as a razor: they have a sharp, severe, strong acumen: they cut everything to pieces."—CECIL.

THE works of God are distinguished not merely by their beauty, order, and harmony, but by their vast variety. If we look into the vegetable, the mineral, or the animal kingdom, whilst the general law of nature rules in the leading features which mark any particular subject of our investigation, yet there is not always the same unbroken chain of uniformity. It is the same in the world of mankind: the variety of complexion that we meet with in mind, is, to some extent, analogous to that which we discover in the countenance: and the mind has

its correspondent influence on the course of action, and directs the movements of the great wheel of life. The successful merchant diverges from the beaten track pursued by his competitors, and *there* is the secret of his prosperity; the renowned warrior has his own peculiar mode of conducting his military tactics, and gains the laurels of victory; the profound statesman brings from the depths of a penetrating mind his own peculiar scheme of policy, and astonishes observers by those capabilities which are developed in the career of his administration. And is it surprising if in the Christian world, we meet with a similar variety of mind and action, as exhibited either in private individuals, or in those who occupy a more conspicuous part, in the carrying on of the great work of God? Whilst the heavenly bodies move in order in their courses, each has its own appointed orbit, and shines with its own particular brightness; and though the track which it follows may sometimes appear to us irregular and eccentric, and not altogether in harmony with the general system, yet there is a controlling power above, overruling the whole, and rendering each individual part subservient to the accomplishment of His great designs. These remarks will be illustrated in the religious career of the subject of this memoir. Whilst as a Christian and a Minister, he appeared as "a burning and a shining light," and so commends

himself to our imitation,—yet there undoubtedly were certain peculiarities of mind and conduct which were essentially his own, which for others to imitate would be to render themselves as ridiculous as the ass in the fable when he put on the lion's skin. The business of the faithful biographer is not to paint an ideal representation of excellence, on the one hand, or, on the other, to dress up a grotesque figure, to excite the mirth of his readers; but to present as far as he is able a true and faithful portrait of the man, so that the leading features may be at once recognised by those who had the pleasure of his acquaintance, and those who knew him not personally may be enabled to picture him to the mind's eye.

HODGSON CASSON was born at Workington, in Cumberland, in the year 1788. Our knowledge of his early history is limited. It does not appear, however, that he derived any peculiar advantages from his parents, or from the place of his birth. His father and mother, although outwardly moral, were at that time strangers to the vital power of godliness. Some external show of religion was kept up, by their attendance on the services of the Established Church; and on a Sabbath evening the family Bible was brought out, a portion of the sacred volume read, and occasionally a prayer, probably selected from the Church Liturgy, was

offered up; and here their devotional exercises terminated,—the closing benediction being a seasonable release from what was regarded as an irksome and tedious task. His parents being strangers to the enjoyment of experimental religion themselves, it is not to be wondered at that they should manifest no anxious concern for the immortal interests of a rising family of eleven children, of whom Hodgson was the eldest.

Workington, at that period, was not favoured with any peculiar religious advantages. Its contiguity to Whitehaven, an old Wesleyan station, had brought it under the eye of the two Ministers stationed there; but the large tract of country around demanding a portion of their ministerial labours, Workington, as might naturally be expected, could obtain but a partial supply. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that in a soil so unpromising, no fruits of holiness should spring up in our young friend: the seeds of depravity sown in his heart, soon produced a plentiful crop, and the propensities of the carnal mind gradually developed themselves.

At an early period of life, his father took him to assist him in his own occupation, but afterwards put him apprentice to a grocer in Workington. Ardent and buoyant in his natural temperament, he entered with zest into the pleasures of the world, and was led by Satan a captive at his will: whilst

his ready wit and humour constituted him the life and soul of his wicked companions, they were proud to regard him as their leader; and together they plunged into the vortex of dissipation and folly. The eccentricities which distinguished him through life, began even then to peep out, in numerous puerile acts of mischievous sport; such as secretly taking out the linchpins of the neighbours' carts, that he might enjoy the merry laugh in seeing the wheel run off,—together with other tricks of a similar character. Yet, in the midst of his sinful mirth, he was far from being happy. "I endeavoured," he says, "to feed the devil's swine with witticisms, in which I had become a tolerable proficient: but although my companions were gratified, it was not so with me; though I fain 'would have filled my belly with the husks which the swine did eat,' yet still there remained an aching void." And there was no singularity in his case. It is said that the celebrated clown Grimaldi, at the very time that he was applauded

"By clapping theatres and shouting crowds,"

was the unhappy subject of inward torture and anguish, from which, with all his powers of diverting others, he felt himself unable to escape.

Mr. Casson was not permitted to pursue his jovial career unchecked. Arrows of conviction, shot by an unseen hand, penetrated his guilty conscience, and a voice, which as yet he knew not, called him

to seek God's face. His own description of these visits of Divine grace is so graphic and telling, that we prefer quoting his own language. "I felt the striving of God's Holy Spirit, but did not understand it. 'Light shined into darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.' I dreaded the justice of God; sometimes I wished there was no God. Death and eternity were subjects that often came into my mind, but I had no desire to think or converse on these gloomy subjects. I had not only an aversion to the cold grave, but feared to meet an angry God; and if the thoughts of death and judgment darted into my mind, I strove to forget them immediately."

The voice of mercy calling in vain, was succeeded by the rod of affliction, and he was brought down to the gates of the grave. His soul being greatly alarmed, he was led to cry unto the Lord in his trouble, though he knew not as yet how "to come to His seat." The terrors of this day of bodily and mental anguish are depicted by his own hand. "A severe fever brought me near the grave; my life was despaired of; death stared me in the face; the horrors of a guilty conscience greatly alarmed me, knowing that I was unprepared to die. Greatly distressed, I wept much, and used broken fragments of church prayers, particularly those for the sick. I often repeated these words with much sincerity,—'Spare me a little, that I may recover

strength before I go hence to be no more seen.' If I had died then, I should doubtless have been lost. I knew nothing of the way for poor sinners to be saved; nor had I any about me that cared for my soul,—or if they did care, they were as ignorant as myself." But there was an interposing arm stretched out to deliver him from destruction. The piercing cry, "Spare me a little," drawn from his inmost soul, entered the ear of Jehovah; and a voice, as yet unknown to him, said, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him." The hand that smote him was stretched out to save,—

"The fever own'd his touch, and fled;"

and the gracious fruits of the afflictive visitation for a while appeared in a partial reformation of life. He acknowledged the kind hand of God in restoring him, and resolved to perform the vow which he had made in the day of his distress. He says,—"I became more serious and thoughtful; I felt a strong desire to be good; I read religious books; I attended the church, frequently twice a day on the Sabbath, and crept into the Methodist chapel at night. In a great measure I forsook my former companions in sin, yet not fully. After all my resolutions, I was carried captive by my besetting sins, such as card-playing, dancing, balls, &c.; but still I was unhappy. I remember the last public amusement of this kind that I attended: I

went ten miles to it, and though I strove to be cheerful, yet my mind was much pained."

Thus did Mr. Casson wander abroad, "seeking rest and finding none." Had there been "a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand," to point him to the source of true happiness,

> "And lend his youth a sacred clue,
> To find the Crucified,"

he might, in all probability, have much earlier found the way of peace. But whilst the Spirit cried "Come," there was no correspondent response of the bride, re-echoing the invitation; and he seems to have been in a great measure thrown upon his own resources, having none to help him. A stranger to the scriptural plan of salvation, he sought to make atonement for his past sins, by reading prayers and attending Divine ordinances. He says, "I was like one groping for the wall in the dark; I felt the need of something, but I did not know what. At that time the Methodists in Workington had prayer-meetings in different parts of the town, after evening service. I wished much to attend, but had not courage to go, without being asked. I very frequently looked for an invitation from the prayer-leaders, and remember asking one of them, 'Have you a prayer-meeting to-night, in your house?' He replied 'Yes;' but did not say, 'Come.' I was disappointed; but soon after I summoned courage to go to one. I was surprised

at their praying one after another, and wondered where they got their prayers. I thought that they must be assisted by books; and as I liked the meeting very much, I began to look out for a prayer-book that contained prayers similar to what the Methodists used, but could never meet with one exactly. However, I met with one with prayers something similar, and made it my companion for several weeks, being not a little proud of it."

About this time, he went to visit a pious uncle, who was a member of the Calvinist church; and as a long conversation had been kept up on the subject of religion, it was proposed that they should unite together in prayer before they parted. This was a duty for which Hodgson was not then prepared. His friends asked *him* to pray, but he refused; they pressed their request, and were not willing to take a denial: and now, remembering his prayer-book in his pocket, he consented to try, if they would kneel down. He then turned his back towards them, and read distinctly one of his prayers, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, during the repeating of which, he seized the convenient opportunity of slipping his prayer-book back into its place. "When we arose from our knees," he says, "they were bathed in tears of gratitude, on account of the change which they believed was wrought in me. When we parted, I felt thankful that I had made such an honourable retreat, but I

resolved to go no more until I could pray without a book. I now became more serious than ever; I often went to hear the Methodists, and prayed in private with my little book, and concluded that I was mending very fast." Under these feelings he went one evening to the chapel. The preacher was the late Rev Benjamin Gregory, a man mighty in the Scriptures; and though on some occasions pressed down by a susceptible, nervous temperament, yet when perfectly unshackled, like a Boanerges, his appeals to the consciences of his hearers were vehement and impassioned, causing them almost irresistibly to quail before the force of truth. The subject was well calculated to make a powerful impression. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The word pierced his heart; the arrows of the Almighty stuck fast within him; and he felt the anguish of a wounded spirit. Tears flowed plentifully down his cheeks; and wherever he was, or in whatever work he engaged, still his heart was drawn out in such fervent aspirations, as the following:—"Lord bless me; teach me! Pardon my sins! Save my soul; and bring me to heaven!" Deep sincerity, and ardent desire were the distinguishing features of his soul, whilst he sought the blessing of forgiveness. He says, "According to the light I had, I believe I was as sincere as an angel, though I did not then perceive the plan of

salvation through Jesus Christ my Lord; but Divine light gradually shined into my mind. The Lord discovered to me my righteousness to be but as filthy rags in his sight. I saw myself a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, but believed that Christ could save me." At this juncture, he received very seasonably an invitation to a Methodist class-meeting, and gladly embraced it. "Burdened with a load of sin," he went, and wrestled with God for pardon. The members of the class rejoiced over him as a true penitent, and poured out their fervent intercessions with his, that he might obtain the blessing of forgiveness. "I was directed," he says; "to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and, praised be God, he gave me power to believe in the name of his Son; and then my burden was all taken away,—I felt that my sins were forgiven,—that I was a new creature in Christ Jesus. The love of God was shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost; and I felt that I was a child of God, and could call him, Abba, Father. Hallelujah to the Lamb!" This important crisis in his history may be dated from the latter end of 1809, or the early part of 1810. He was then in the twenty-first year of his age, in the bloom of youth and vigour, ready with a free and glad heart, to consecrate all the energies of body and soul to the service and glory of Him who had called him out of darkness into marvellous light.

CHAPTER II.

HIS CALL TO PREACH.—1815, AYR.

"The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the gaping grave."
J. Wesley.

We have now to contemplate Mr. Casson under a new aspect. Having been cast into the mould of the Gospel, he came out transformed in all the powers of his soul, bearing the lively impression of that righteousness and true holiness, which it is the peculiar province of the renewing power of Divine grace to communicate. The change was too striking to escape the observation of his former comrades in sin; to them it would be a most inexplicable enigma; and we cannot suppose that they would tamely sit down under the desertion of their leader, without using some efforts to divert him from the strange path upon which he had entered. But the same determined inflexibility of purpose, which had been one of his prominent features in his unconverted state, was now laid hold of by the omnipotent power of the Holy

Spirit, and so transferred to the new man, as to form one of the most striking and distinguishing traits of his character, during the forty years of his future pilgrimage. It was not in the power of sophistry, however specious, successfully to entice, nor of opposition the most formidable, forcibly to drive him back into the paths which he had abandoned. He presented a bold and determined front to all opposers, and stood like a rock, unshaken in the midst of storms.

There is nothing like Christianity for developing a man's real character; and for bringing out into full play those innate powers and faculties of the soul, which might otherwise have remained dormant, or, what is worse, have been prostituted to the most injurious and mischievous purposes. And in some particular cases, it is astonishing how soon the change effected by the renewing influence of grace begins to exhibit itself. Some men cannot be hid: whether in the service of Diabolus or Shaddai, they become prominent, marked men. They must be doing something. The very same chapter (Acts ix.) that unfolds to us the furious career of the persecuting Saul of Tarsus, after presenting unto us his extraordinary conversion, acquaints us that "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God." So it was with Hodgson Casson.

One of the immediate results of his con-

version, was an ardent desire to promote the salvation of his fellow-men. He saw himself surrounded by multitudes of perishing sinners, and remembering his own former dark and wretched condition, his bowels of pity and compassion yearned over them. He went from house to house, to tell the people what the Lord had done for his soul, and earnestly exhorted them to seek for a similar change. His naturally heroic spirit burst forth into action; and he who had been a front rank man in the army of Satan, having come over into the ranks of Emmanuel, was prepared to wield the sword of the Spirit, and to lay hold of every opportunity of damaging the interests of that cause, in which he had once been so heartily engaged. Believing that he was called of God to preach the Gospel, he obeyed, and was received on trial as a Local Preacher. He was instant in season and out of season,—not confining himself to places appropriated to Divine worship, but holding forth the word of life in the highways and public markets, or any spot to which he could draw a listening multitude: and God graciously assisted him, and so blessed the word, as to demonstrate the wisdom of His appointment in choosing "the foolish things of the world"—men esteemed rude and illiterate—"to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." His bold, zealous, faithful preaching, caused a great

excitement; but the constraining love of Jesus was the fuel which continually fed that flame which, "as a burning fire shut up in his bones," was continually struggling to find vent. In the meantime the spirit of persecution was roused; and, one evening in particular, his life was in imminent peril. Returning from Maryport, where he had been preaching, he was met by a company of five or six men. They at first allowed him to pass quietly along; but immediately turning round, commenced a murderous attack upon him, beating him most furiously upon the head with their clubs, till they concluded they had despatched him. His friends afterwards learned that his assailants were a party of men, who were returning from mass, to Maryport, and who probably had been incensed by some public testimony which he had borne against their delusions. His head was severely cut, and to this early suffering for Christ's sake may be attributed the peculiar protuberance it ever after presented; and it is not at all improbable but that this night's catastrophe laid the foundation of those fits to which he was subject, through the principal part of his ministry.

It must be obvious to the reflecting reader, that the subject of our memoir would have to encounter no common difficulties, in the commencement of his public labours. The defective and very inefficient education of his youth; the habits he had con-

tracted in his sinful career; the disadvantages under which he laboured in the way of obtaining spiritual instruction; in connection with his previous erroneous views of the great scheme of Christianity;—all seemed to present formidable barriers in the way of his attempting to engage publicly to make known the Gospel of Christ. But he began with first rudiments: "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." This was the burthen of his preaching; and he believed and felt the truths which he spake. As Cecil excellently remarks, "Faith is the mainspring of a Minister. Hell is before me, and thousands of souls shut up there in everlasting agonies. Jesus Christ stands forth, to save men from rushing into this bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim his mercy and love. I want no fourth idea; every fourth idea is contemptible,—every fourth idea is a grand impertinence." On principles like these he acted, anxious to save souls from death. At the same time he laboured assiduously to improve his mental qualifications: he was not insensible of the value of intellectual culture, and of his own great lack of it. All that he could do to repair past neglect was, to apply himself with redoubled diligence to the improvement of his mind; "redeeming the time" from sleep and recreation, that he might pursue his favourite studies. The writings of Wesley, Fletcher,

and Benson, were his delight; he endeavoured to form his mind by them, as his model; and, so eager was his pursuit after knowledge, that he was in the habit of sitting up the whole of two nights in the week, for the purpose of reading, meditation, and prayer. This would have made a serious and rapid inroad upon some constitutions. Though the God of nature had endowed him with a robust, strong-built frame, yet in this instance his zeal outstripped the bounds of prudence. After acting in the capacity of a Local Preacher for about five years, in the Whitehaven Circuit, he believed it to be the will of God that he should be entirely devoted to the full work of the Christian ministry. In this opinion his brethren fully coincided: and although we have no written memorandum of his views and feelings in connection with his entrance upon the ministerial work, yet we cannot question the purity of his motives; and the eminent success of his future labours may be regarded as indicative that he had not mistaken his call, or run before he was sent.

After passing the usual preparatory examinations of that day, he was recommended to the Conference of 1815, and accepted as a probationer, receiving his first appointment to the Ayr and Kilmarnock Circuit, in Scotland. It was his privilege to be associated with the Rev. George Thompson, a man of kindred soul, under whose

counsels and superintendence he had already been employed for three years in the Whitehaven Circuit. They knew each other well: he venerated Mr. Thompson as a father, and was sincerely loved by him in return, for his piety and zeal. Concerning his kind Superintendent, he used sometimes playfully to remark, "I served a seven years' apprenticeship under him;"—embracing the three years just alluded to, two years in Ayr, and two in the Kendal Circuit.

It was a crisis in Mr. Casson's history, to commence his labours under the direction of such a master in Israel; a man who was remarkable for his yearning compassion for souls, and who in faith, in love, and in zeal, was an example worthy of imitation. He was a man of one business; and it is said that the late Dr. Chalmers, after hearing him preach before the Glasgow District-Meeting, remarked, that he went about the work of conversion in the most business-like way of any man he ever heard. In his young friend he had a cheerful and willing assistant, ready to co-operate in all his plans: enterprise and push marked their every movement; and deep anxiety for a large amount of success, strongly characterised them both: and when during their ministrations in the Circuit they were necessarily separated from each other, sometimes for the period of a fortnight together, the first inquiry with which they

greeted each other, upon their meeting again, was usually this: "Well, what good has been done? How many souls have been saved?" They were eminently of one heart and soul, and lovingly drew together in the same yoke: not a wrong word or a shy look ever disturbed their peace, or interrupted their harmony. A union was formed betwixt them, which was long perpetuated. "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." For, having rested from their labours, their mortal remains quietly slumber within a few yards of each other, in the cemetery at York, awaiting the approach of the resurrection morn, when their union shall be renewed under happier circumstances, in brighter regions,

> "Where glory sits in every face,
> And friendship smiles in every eye."

Mr. Casson, having completed the necessary preparations for his new employ, bade farewell to his father's house; and, after the fashion of primitive days, taking his staff in his hand, proceeded on foot, a distance of more than 120 miles, to the place of his destination. But love to God, and zeal for the salvation of souls, sweetened all his toils. On his entrance upon his ministerial work, he found little in Scotia's soil that was congenial with the ardour of his own active mind. There was not much that appeared inviting in his new field of labour: Methodism was comparatively low in that

Circuit, and it is understood that by far the majority of the members, and the hearers too, were natives of the Emerald Isle.

He surveyed the peculiarity of his position, and felt himself in the midst of a people who required arousing. The mere stated performance of a certain quantum of religious duty, in a dry, formal way, could never satisfy that longing desire which glowed within him to promote the salvation of those that heard him. He saw that something out of the ordinary way must be attempted, and his peculiarly witty and inventive mind hit upon a plan to excite the people. Taking a chair upon his shoulder, he sallied out into the public street at Kilmarnock, and proceeding along, proclaimed, at the top of his voice,—"A roup!* a roup! at ——" (mentioning a certain part of the town). The people turned out: the crowd continually increasing, till they reached the spot; when he mounted his chair, and, directing the attention of his auditory to the first verse of the 55th chapter of Isaiah, he invited them to come and buy wine and milk at a price to which none could object,—"without money." At the close of the service, he invited his audience to attend the regular performance of Divine worship at the Wesleyan preaching-room; and, singular as this expedient might be regarded, the end contemplated was answered, in a good increase of regular hearers.

* The Scotch term for sale.

We are not prepared to state that Mr. Casson's ministry, in his first Circuit, was attended with any extraordinary success. Nor is this surprising, when we take into account, on the one hand, his comparative youth and inexperience, and on the other, the indifference with which the Scotch generally regarded the peculiarities of Methodism. Their antiquated psalmody had more melody in their ears than the light and cheerful airs which the young Preacher introduced; and the long set discourses, to which they had been accustomed to listen from their boyhood, under their own Ministers, were more attractive to them than the "slap-dash" style of the young Cumbrian. Whilst the members of our own Society at Ayr, and its neighbourhood, esteemed him as a pious and zealous servant of his great Master, by most others who knew anything of him, he was considered only as an honest enthusiast. At the conclusion of his two years' ministry, the numbers in Society do not appear, from the Minutes of the Conference, to have been any larger than when, in conjunction with his amiable and excellent Superintendent, he entered upon the Circuit. The most zealous and faithful preaching does not always command success; and the divinely appointed messenger of salvation is not unfrequently furnished with a practical comment on the inspired attestation of divine truth, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith

the Lord of Hosts." May we not conclude that the first appointment of Mr. Casson was in the order of that providential arrangement by which, as in a rather painful course of discipline, he was trained for the great enterprise upon which he was entering? A barren, sterile soil, which seemed to mock his attempts at cultivation, would preach to him many an humiliating lesson of the feebleness of man, and his entire dependence upon an agency more effective than anything human. In the same school was the famed German Reformer, Philip Melancthon trained; who, "when he first changed his religious views, conceived it impossible for others to withstand the evidence of truth, in the public ministry of the Gospel; but after forming a better acquaintance with human nature, and living to witness the futility of those fond but ill-founded expectations which a warm-hearted piety is at first disposed to cherish, remarked, that he found old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon."

CHAPTER III.

1817.—KENDAL.

"Paul's love of Christ and steadiness unbribed,
Were copied close in him, and well transcribed.
He followed Paul; his zeal a kindred flame,
His apostolic charity the same.
Like him he labour'd, and like him content
To bear it, suffer'd shame, where'er he went."

COWPER.

THE wise arrangements in the economy of Wesleyan Methodism, as exhibited in the periodical changes which take place in the Stations of its Ministers, have often been admired. By this means the diversified talents of the Preachers are brought to bear on different congregations, the peculiar tastes of a greater number of hearers are gratified, and the excitement awakened by novelty is rendered subservient to the great interests of religion. It is not less beneficial to Ministers themselves; (setting aside the correctness of the sentiment espoused by the founder of Methodism, that it is next to impossible for a man to preserve the spiritual efficiency of his ministry if confined to one congregation;) since a change, in some instances, occasions the

removal of a man from a locality where his labours have been perhaps to a great extent fruitless, and introduces him to a fresh scene of action for which he is more adapted. Methodism, it has been said, has a place for every man; and this Mr. Casson realised, when, with his beloved colleague, Mr. Thompson, he removed to Kendal in 1817. The Circuit was an extensive one, embracing a rich profusion of romantic scenery. Towering mountains, wide spread lakes, and luxuriant valleys, invited the inspection and admiration of the tourist, and formed a scene of recreation and quiet retreat for the care-worn invalid, debilitated by the excessive tasks imposed on his frame by the demands of business. But the view presented to the man who sees by faith's enlightened eye was the reverse of all this. Here was a locality presenting a field for cultivation, almost as unpromising as the barren heaths, or the rugged mountain tops which surrounded him, and which would necessarily involve a vast amount of hard labour and toil. Many discouraging circumstances met the Ministers on their arrival. The finances were in a depressed state; a heavy debt had been accumulated, which it became necessary to remove. Mr. Casson saw their position, and in order to relieve the funds of the Circuit, though at the expense of his own comforts, generously proposed to relinquish all pecuniary claim for his board,—to seek his provision amongst

the principal friends, residing with them one after another,—and thus to extinguish an important item in the ordinary expenditure. His proposal was cheerfully accepted, and the financial state of the Circuit was soon placed in a satisfactory position. The spiritual aspect of affairs was equally cheerless; but he was not discouraged. His spirit was stirred within him, and, in conjunction with his colleague, he commenced his work of toil; and soon had the satisfaction to see the wilderness become a fruitful field. His first Sabbath was at Kendal, where he opened his commission; and independently of the excitement generally connected with the first appearance of a new Minister, the people, delighted with his heart-stirring addresses, soon perceived the character of his ministry. At the close of the prayer-meeting, after the evening sermon, a good woman, in the warmth and simplicity of her heart, thus addressed him: "Well, Sir, you have a spark of fire and zeal, but I am afraid you will lose it all before you have gone round the Circuit." And had the holy fire been dependent for its existence on human agency, the prediction might have been verified; but fed with supplies from the heavenly altar, it continued to burn with steady and increasing fervour, so that meeting the good sister on his return from the country, he smilingly saluted her exclaiming, "Praise the Lord, Sarah, I've got a spark left yet!"

On his first visit to Sedbergh, in the eastern part of the Circuit, he felt anxious to ascertain, from the inmates of the farm-house where he was entertained, what was the spiritual condition of the neighbourhood; and not receiving the most satisfactory reply, he appeared deeply absorbed in thought, and struggling with inward emotion. His faith in the power and truth of God, seemed for the moment to be cast into the crucible; but it came out bright and vigorous, "unto praise, honour, and glory." He rose from his seat, walked about the room as if engaged in meditation and prayer, breaking out occasionally into this soliloquy, "Souls *shall be saved!*—souls *must be* saved!" His hostess stared with astonishment. "Well, well," thought she, "we have had as good-like men in the Circuit here before you, and souls have not been saved." But his faith triumphed over her unbelief. The hour for Divine worship arrived; a larger congregation than usual assembled, some drawn by curiosity to see the new Preacher; the unction of the Holy Ghost accompanied the word; several were awakened; and one or two souls found peace. When he came again, the room was crowded, a great many were obliged to stand without; and in all his subsequent visits to the place, similar results appeared, and many sinners were converted. The current of the good woman's thoughts was now changed; she was persuaded that there had ap-

peared "a prophet among them." Like the Shunamite of old, she considered it an honour to prepare for him the chamber, and the bed, and the stool, and the candlestick; "and so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread." And though the prophet is gone, the recollection of his excellences still lingers in the heart of his now aged hostess, whose countenance was streaming with tears as she gave this artless relation, and whose greatest delight seems to be to cherish the remembrance of her friend.

In the Circuit-town, brighter days began to dawn. The old Methodist custom of holding morning meetings, at five o'clock, was revived, and the hour consecrated to fervent prayer for the revival of the work of God. By this means the co-operation of the Leaders and Local Preachers was enlisted, and the richer showers of Divine influence descended on the Hill of Zion. A memorable season of this character occurred at Kendal, on New Year's Eve. Whilst Mr. Casson was preaching, the awakening and convincing Spirit descended so copiously, that many were constrained to cry aloud for mercy; and, amongst others, a respectable married female. On her return home, her husband, who had been at the chapel, reproved her for having made herself a public gazing-stock, intimating that she might go to heaven, without making so much ado about it. She meekly replied,

that if he had felt as she had, he would have cried out too. "No," said he, "I would not have made such a fool of myself." The next evening Mr. Casson preached again; very soon a man, unable any longer to restrain himself, gave utterance to the inward strugglings of his soul. "That is right," exclaimed the Preacher; "I will come down and pray with you, and let any others who feel their need of salvation begin to cry for it." The concern became general,—the chapel became a Bochim, a place of weeping,—and being much crowded, it was rather difficult to obtain free access to the penitents. Mr. Casson seeing it desirable to clear the chapel of those who were merely looking on, and unconcerned, sprang upon a form, shouting at the extent of his voice, "Now, all of you that do not want your souls converting, take your hats and be off; for if you stay here you will be converted to-night." Several took him at his word, and hastened away. He then said, "Let those who are left, cry so much the louder;" so that the confusion occasioned by those who were leaving, and the increasing cries of souls in distress, became greater. At length order being restored, the penitents were directed to the atoning Lamb, and one after another entered into Gospel liberty. At the close of this extraordinary meeting, being anxious to ascertain the number of those who had been saved, he requested them to stand up, when several rose in

different parts of the chapel. He then proposed that they should come forward, and form a ring. They did so; and amongst the rest the husband and wife above referred to, thus unexpectedly meeting, in the transport of joy, fell into each other's arms, each saying to the other, "I did not know that thou wert one." "O," said Mr. Casson, you have taken each other for better and for worse: the worse has come first, and now it will be all the better." He then inquired of all the penitents present, as to the state of mind of each previous to entering the chapel, and the nature of the change they had experienced. He wrote down their names, and calling a suitable person to take charge of them, delivered them into his care, saying: "Now, here is a Class for you, here are their names; they have had their first Class-meeting, spoken their experience; now you have nothing to do but go on." It is scarcely necessary to remark, that this is not the usual mode by which Class-leaders are appointed to office in the Wesleyan Society: but Mr. Casson often acted on the spur of the moment; and probably the person to whom he, in such a summary manner committed the new Class, was already a recognised Leader.

Mr. Casson had a peculiar tact for making bold and daring sorties upon the camp of the enemy, and was often successful in cases where men of less impetuosity and energy would have failed. The

mpression forced itself upon his mind, that he ought to be as courageous in the cause of God as he had formerly been in that of Satan. This idea, embodied in action, led him to attempt hazardous enterprises, from which men of a cool and calculating mind would have shrunk. One evening whilst in his country appointment, not far from Kendal, having heard that a number of men were drinking in the public-house of the village, he resolved to go amongst them. His friends in vain attempted to persuade him not to run into danger; his determination was fixed, and, fearless of consequences, he went. Entering the room where the party were seated, he thus accosted them:—"Well, my lads, you're serving a hard master." They gazed at him with astonishment, and some of them began to stammer out, "Who are you?" A few more coarse jokes and gibes passed amongst them; but the bold intruder, nothing daunted, proceeded to warn them of the evils attendant upon the course they were pursuing, and the certainty of bringing down upon themselves present misery and eternal damnation, if not prevented by timely repentance. They seemed inclined to listen; and two or three of the company, handing him a glass, invited him to drink along with them, telling him he was a good fellow. He consented upon one condition,—that they should all kneel down whilst he prayed. The greater number of them agreed,

expecting to have some fine sport. Most earnestly and impressively he prayed that God would open their blind eyes, convince them of sin, and convert their souls. As he continued praying, some who were at first reluctant to bend, were seen gradually dropping on their knees; whilst the tears were plenteously coursing one another down the cheeks of several of those who were bowed around him. The scene was a singular one: the drunkard's retreat turned into a house of prayer,—the glasses standing half empty on the table,—and a number of dissolute wretches, who perhaps for years had never prayed to the God of heaven, unless for damnation, melted down by the fervent supplications of the man of God, on the very spot consecrated to ribaldry and song. When they rose from their knees, more sober reflections appeared to absorb their minds: none of them repeated the invitation to drink; they respectfully thanked him for his visit, and as in retiring he kindly urged upon them the importance of salvation, many of them were deeply affected, and there is reason to hope that this bold stroke on their camp, resulted in some of the company receiving spiritual good.

No doubt but much of the success which attended Mr. Casson's exertions, not merely on such singular occasions as this, but in the general course of his ministry, may be attributed to his living in the enjoyment of close communion with God. All his

actions were sanctified by prayer; and whilst the sacred historian has thought right to immortalize the Mount Carmel of old, where the son of Shaphat had his closet of retirement, it may not be regarded as an insignificant circumstance to particularize a certain spot at Burnside, where a hollow oak stands, to which Mr. Casson, when at that village, was in the habit of retiring for meditation and prayer,—the reminiscence of which is perpetuated by its having received the designation of "Casson's Oak."

Another anecdote of his remarkable prevalency in prayer, which occurred in this Circuit, may not inappropriately be introduced here. In a country village, one of the members of the Society was taken seriously ill, and every indication appeared that the sickness was unto death. The disease baffled every attempt of his medical attendant to stay its progress, and he had announced to the sorrowing family that there was no hope. Mr. Casson was passing through the place, and being informed of the circumstance, hastened to the bed-side of his afflicted brother. After some conversation with those who were around, he said, "Let us all pray!" and, kneeling down, he pleaded earnestly with God for some time, that if consistent with the Divine will, the man might recover. It was a time of God's power, and the presence of the Most High appeared to overshadow them. Rising from his knees, and taking hold of the sick man's

hand, he said, "Christopher, you will live: prayer is heard." The man opened his eyes, and responded, "I believe I shall." From that hour the disease was arrested, a gradual recovery followed, and he was soon able to resume his occupation. Both himself and his friends attributed his unexpected restoration as from the gates of death, to the prayer of faith. He lived for thirty years after this, a useful member of the Society in the place, and did not hesitate to acknowledge that he owed his life, under God, to Hodgson Casson's prayer.

Before we close this chapter, an anecdote or two may be introduced, illustrative of the faithful and successful manner in which he reproved open sin. His love to the souls of men, and his jealous concern for God's glory, would not allow him to see his brother sin, and pass on without rebuking him. One Sabbath morning, as he was proceeding to his appointment, across one of those barren moors so common in that wild and romantic neighbourhood, he espied a man hard at work in digging turf, generally used there for the poor man's fire. Mr. Casson remonstrated with him on the sinfulness of his conduct, in violating the day of the Lord, but with little effect; the man attempting to justify his proceeding, on the plea of his having a large family, and that he had to work hard through the week, and they must have fuel for the winter. Finding the man proof against arguments, he changed his

mode of attack, and looking at him rather more sternly, he rejoined, "But let me tell you, this ground belongs to my father; you have no business here, to cut peat, without his leave: come along with me, and we will see whether he will grant you leave to cut turf on Sunday morning." The man was obliged to desist, and throwing his spade over his shoulder, tamely followed, concluding him to be the son of the proprietor of the common. As they trudged along, Mr. Casson renewed his remonstrances on the sin of violating the Sabbath, and then more pointedly dealt some home-strokes on the guilt and danger of his spiritual state. The heart of the conscience-stricken sinner began to melt, and the tears of contrition to trickle down his cheeks. Upon arriving at a convenient spot, Mr. Casson made a sudden pause, saying, "Now, God Almighty is my Father; we will kneel down and ask Him if it be right to cut peat on a Sunday." He prayed; the man trembled, and united with him in fervent supplications for mercy, and obtained a sense of pardon. It is said that he took him along with him to the place of preaching, and rejoiced to exhibit to the people a trophy of saving grace.

At that period, the junior Preacher in Kendal was directed to exchange occasionally with the Minister at Ulverstone: and at that place Mr. Casson, one Sabbath morning, had to preach Passing along the street on his way to the chapel

he caught a glance of a young man, standing at the window of a house, cleaning shoes. He paused,—then suddenly gave a smart knock at the window, which made the young man start back. This was followed by a severe reproof for the desecration of the Sabbath, and a solemn warning to flee from the wrath to come. The arrow of conviction reached the conscience: the young man followed him to the chapel, was awakened, sought, and found mercy: he became a member of the church of Christ, and was afterwards called into the ministry. When Mr. Casson used to relate this incident in familiar conversation with his friends, he humorously remarked, "I shot a man through the window, without breaking the glass."

On one occasion, whilst in the same District, he was desirous of preaching in the open air, at Broughton-in-Furness. To prevent the congregation from hearing, some "lewd fellows of the baser sort" got into the belfry of the parish church, and began to ring the bells. But he was not the man to be foiled without a contest. He gave out one of his favourite hymns; and, having a powerful and sonorous voice, sung verse after verse, and hymn after hymn, until he fairly tired the ringers out.

But Mr. Casson was not only faithful in reproving the sinner when he fell in his way, but went out into the wilderness to seek after the lost sheep that had strayed from the fold. Hearing in one of the

country villages of a man of the name of Tom Punch, who had once been lively and zealous, but had fallen from grace, he resolved to go and see him. He boldly inquired, on entering his house, "Does Tom Punch live here?" A voice from a man at his loom replied, "I am he." Looking earnestly at him, he said, "Come down, Tom; I have a message from God unto thee." The man came down; when Mr. Casson seriously expostulated with him on the guilt and danger of backsliding. He then gave out the following verse,—

"My soul breaks out in strong desire,
The perfect bliss to prove;
My longing heart is all on fire,
To be dissolved in love."

They sung the verse together, repeating it again and again, and then united in prayer, till God spake peace to his soul, and the man once more rejoiced in God his Saviour.

During the latter year of his ministry in Kendal, he formed an intimate acquaintance with the late Rev. T. L. Hodgson, the enterprising African Missionary, who was then travelling at Lancaster, the adjoining Circuit. The burning love to souls which distinguished them both, appears to have knit them together in bonds of sincere affection; and it was customary for them to meet each other once a month, at the delightful village of Bowness, on the banks of the Lake Windermere, for the

purpose of Christian communion, and of adding fresh fuel to the fire of holy love already kindled in their hearts. Not satisfied to benefit themselves alone, but to give an opportunity to the friends in the surrounding neighbourhood of participating in the same blessed exercises, they agreed to hold a lovefeast at one of those friendly interviews. The meeting continued long, but the interest was deep and telling,—the recollection of which still lingers in the hearts of some who were present at it.

After Mr. Casson had for two years done the work of an evangelist in this Circuit, and fulfilled his ministry in it, he had the satisfaction of leaving half as many more members in the Society as he had found at the commencement.—the numbers having increased from 300 to 450.

CHAPTER IV.

1819.—BROUGH AND PENRITH.

"A MINISTER should make experiments on himself and others, in order to find out what will produce effect. He is a fisherman; and the fisherman is to fit himself to his employment. If some fish will bite only by day, he must fish by day; if others will bite only by moonlight, he must fish for them by moonlight."—CECIL.

MR. CASSON having passed the usual period of probation, was received into full connection with the Wesleyan body at the Conference of 1819, held in Bristol. Having in contemplation an early entrance into the marriage state, he received an appointment to the Brough and Penrith Circuit; and bade farewell to his venerated father and friend Mr. Thompson, to whom he was most cordially attached, and to the affectionate Society in Kendal, by whom he was sincerely esteemed. He found in his new Superintendent, the Rev. John Rawson, a man of kindred soul,—possessing a fine, noble, unselfish spirit,—combining in his character many of the admirable qualities of the Christian Bishop—generous-hearted, and open-handed to the last. His happiness was bound up with the pros-

perity of God's church: he truly cared for souls, and was ever ready to embark in any legitimate project to advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. It was his happiness to be yoked with an amiable helpmate, like-minded with himself,—deeply pious, lacking in no Christian quality, and constantly occupied in schemes of usefulness. "Her adorning" was truly "a meek and quiet spirit;" prayer was her element; perfect love shone forth in her, in all its lustre; whilst her holy example kindled a heavenly fervour wherever she went. A friend who had an intimate acquaintance with her says,—"I never expect to see her like on this side heaven: she not only excelled all the daughters, but sons too, with whom I was ever acquainted."

With such an excellent pair, Mr. Casson soon found himself at home: to his kind Superintendent, he felt strongly attached; like David and Jonathan, they were of one soul; and an undeviating esteem for each other was maintained to the latest period of life. The Rev. James Miller, whose residence was in Penrith, was associated with them. In union with his colleagues, and especially under the supervision of his judicious Superintendent, he entered into schemes of determined attack on the territories of the enemy. He cheerfully went from house to house, in the villages, to arouse the apathetic inhabitants, and drag them out to the service of the sanctuary; and, in addition to this, regular field-

days were appointed, and public notice of the time and place of their being held, was circulated far and wide. Sometimes a number of zealous and warm-hearted Local-Preachers and exhorters, from adjoining Circuits, cheerfully rendered their aid.

There is something rather peculiar and unique in such meetings in this country, though they have been very common in America, where they are known as Camp-meetings. The brother of the writer was present on one of those occasions, and still retains a vivid impression of the scene; but it should have been witnessed to form an adequate idea of it. Imagine a fine vernal Sabbath morning: great numbers of people from every quarter are threading their way,—all towards one point of attraction. It is a large field, not far from Bolton, in the neighbourhood of Appleby. Preparations have been made beforehand, in anticipation of the day; and a long cart, placed in the most commanding position in the field, attracts our attention. Yonder, a tall, strong-built, muscular man, with a sallow complexion, short neck, and shoulders more than usually broad, apparently near six feet in height, has taken up his position in the middle of the cart. His dress is after the old Methodist style,—a long, single-breasted coat, a pair of black breeches, with buttons and strings just below the knees. It is Hodgson Casson. On him devolves the task of delivering the opening sermon. After singing and prayer, he takes out

his pocket Bible; he announces Mark xi. 13,—"And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves." After noticing the application of the parable, according to its original design, to the case of the Jewish nation, which, notwithstanding the culture it had received by the special ministry of Jesus Christ, and especially during the three last preceding years, was now on the point of being hewn down by the Roman axe; he considered it in reference to the state and character of his present hearers, and proceeded to point out,—1st. Those that have nothing but leaves; 2d. The persons that have both leaves and fruit; and, 3d. Notice such as have neither. On the first head he graphically depicted the fruitless professor as a strict moralist, having a round-about form of religious ceremonies, attending regularly on the ministry of the word, and at the sacraments, with Prayer-Book under arm; and reading the Bible on the Sunday afternoon, till half of the family had fallen asleep under it. His discourse was characterized by great faithfulness, and produced a deep impression: every eye appeared directed to the speaker, and deep solemnity seemed to rest on every countenance. His address is followed by another, delivered by one of his brethren beside him; after which several voices are heard uttering fervent supplications to Him

> "Whose temple is all space,
> Whose altar, earth, sea, skies."

An announcement is then made that the religious services will be suspended for an hour, in order to allow the people, some of whom have travelled from afar, an opportunity of partaking of such refreshment as they may have brought with them. After about an hour's relaxation, the preacher again mounts the cart: with a keen and penetrating eye, darting through the length and breadth of the field, he surveys the scattered groups, and, desirous of drawing them nearer to him, proclaims, as with the sound of a crier, at the highest pitch of a commanding musical voice, "Come aw-a-a-a-a-a-y," repeating the call three or four times. A movement is instantly apparent; the well-known voice acts as a spell of magic; an anxiety to reach the preacher is manifested in every part of the field, and arriving at the spot, solemn singing and prayer recommence the business of the day.

The afternoon's subject of discourse, is Moses's choice, as described in Heb. xi. 24—26. A striking picture of Moses is drawn to the very life; the hearers have the whole scene passing before them, in the minute picturesque description, drawn by the rich imagination of the speaker, unfolding to the mind's eye a varied and pleasing diorama. They see the ark on the river's brink,—the little sister watching on the top of the hill,—the approach of Pharaoh's daughter,—the weeping babe,—and the eager haste with which the little girl runs

home, and "shouts at the foot of the stairs," for "mother" to "come away." The whole history of the remarkable preservation of the child;—his education, and bringing up at Pharaoh's court; his contempt of the pleasures, honours, and gratifications within his reach; his noble choice;—all are detailed with such graphic minuteness, as to enchain the attention of the people; whilst at every fitting opportunity he applies the hammer of the Divine word, to clinch the nail of conviction on the consciences of his hearers. When he approached that part of the subject which depicts the light esteem in which Moses held the riches of Egypt, he dealt some of his heaviest blows against the sin of covetousness, which, he feared, was the besetting sin of the people; and in a style peculiarly his own,—with a look bordering on the severe,—and in impassioned strains, such as few but himself would have been tolerated in giving utterance to, he exclaimed, "Some of you would sell your consciences for a groat! Yea, ye would sell the devil if you could make a penny by him!" He is aware that some will be offended: but the recklessness which is exhibited in the pursuit of wealth, and the unscrupulous means by which it is often obtained, excite the pointed rebuke. The honours of the world are exposed as empty bubbles, which soon explode. At the application, he takes his silver pencil from his waistcoat pocket, calling upon them to weigh

the subjects that have been brought before them, and balancing it across his fore-finger, exclaims, "Now, the scales are equal! Put into the left side worldly pleasure, then worldly honour, then worldly riches: make it as heavy as you please. But what shall we put in the opposite scale? First, reproach for Christ. What's that? Having the name cast out as evil. Why, that cannot weigh much! Never mind, put it in. What next? Affliction with the people of God. Why, that is very light,—a poor skeleton; it can weigh but little! Never mind, put it in. But what besides? 'The recompense of the reward.' What's that? 'A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!' Ah, that kicks the beam, and makes it far preponderate!" Then, in a manner the most solemn and impressive, he puts the question to the spell-bound multitude, "Which side of the scale will you have, —the heavier or the lighter end?" The effect was mighty and overwhelming,—and it was hoped that some made the happy choice.

It has been already intimated that Mr. Casson, prior to his removal to Brough, had formed a matrimonial engagement. This is a momentous step in any man's history; but it is of the utmost importance in the case of a Christian Minister, as not only much of his personal comfort, but of his usefulness, depends on the character of his future companion in life. In this step he sought, and

obtained direction; and in Miss Mary Dent, of Bolton, near Appleby, he found an amiable female, of decided piety, exhibiting in the tenor of her life and conversation those graces which constitute the true adorning of the Christian. Though their union was brief, it was an eminently happy one; "the heart of her husband safely trusted in her," and "she did him good and not evil all the days of her life." After his marriage he continued to reside in Brough.

His new Circuit, like the one he had left, was a straggling agricultural district. In many of the villages he had much to deplore in contemplating the low state of vital religion; but he brought all his energies into action to promote a revival. It cannot be denied that his general style of preaching in this Circuit was, to a certain extent, below the dignity of the pulpit,—descending more to the level of his hearers, than attempting to raise them to a higher point of elevation. The only apology that can be offered in extenuation of many of his quaint and odd expressions, is, that the love of souls was the absorbing passion of his life, and he appears to have regarded no means unhallowed which were calculated to save men. His own plea in vindication of his eccentricities, was, that he aimed to induce those who were careless to come and hear for themselves; and that he always took care to give them the full Gospel word of truth

along with the denunciations of God's holy law. On the same principles, we may account for many of the strange expedients which he adopted to obtain a congregation. It could never satisfy his ardent mind, regularly to attend his appointments, and in a formal manner go through the usual routine of a service, with a few individuals scattered here and there in corners, when there were scores of families around who were lounging in idleness at home: he cared not what obloquy might attach to himself, if he could but gain these; and was willing if he might but be instrumental in winning souls, to be accounted a fool for Christ's sake. Hence, sometimes, accompanied by two or three warm-hearted men, he would enter a small town or a country village, singing along the public streets; and by some grotesque arrangement of their dress, so excite the wondering attention of the people as to draw them out of their houses to see what these strange men were about; whilst he stealthily led them to the door of the sanctuary and then urged them to enter and hear the word of salvation. At such times his congregation would present an amusing appearance,—men without coats, and women without bonnets, having been hurried on the spur of the moment to the house of God. In one place, which his predecessors had long tried, without making any particular impression, he saw that some strange expedient was

necessary, and his inventive mind devised the following. At the commencement of the service, he kneeled down, and repeated aloud the Lord's Prayer; then prayed extempore,—sung a few verses,—preached his sermon,—and at the close of it announced his text. His hearers stared with astonishment · and the report soon circulated through the place, that one of the most strange preachers had come that they had ever had, for "he had put the cart before the horse all the way through." His object, however, was gained; curiosity was excited, and he never lacked a congregation there afterwards. But whilst these eccentric movements are recorded, it is in order to preserve a faithful delineation of the man, and not to exhibit them as models for general imitation: schemes which terminated successfully in his hands, would, if attempted by others, only cover them with ridicule. Yet, if we hesitate to justify all his measures, we cannot but admire the spirit that suggested them; and we think we discover in the purity of his motives, and the warmth of his holy zeal, a counterpart of the spirit and conduct of the sainted Fletcher, of Madeley, who "pursued sinners to every corner of his parish; by all sorts of means, public and private, early and late, in season and out of season, entreating and warning them to flee from the wrath to come.—Taking a bell in his hand, he set out every Sunday for some months at

five in the morning, and went round the most distant parts of his parish, inviting the inhabitants to the house of God."

A little incident may be recorded, illustrative of the happy playfulness of his disposition, and of his incessant watchfulness to promote the spiritual welfare of the humblest individual who might providentially be thrown in his way. At the time of his residence in Brough, he was favoured with the visit of an old friend, Mr. Jonathan Kershaw, from the Kendal Circuit, a well-known zealous Local-Preacher, and somewhat popular in the neighbouring dales. One day, as they were dining together, a poor woman knocked at his door to solicit alms. In the warmth of his sympathy for the distressed, he hospitably invited her to come in, and sit down to the table, and partake of a little dinner along with them; his friend and he continuing their conversation on spiritual subjects, and especially on the Scriptural plan of salvation by Jesus Christ. After the woman had finished her comfortable repast, she arose to take her leave, gratefully expressing her sense of the kindness thus unexpectedly shown her. Mr. Casson sprang up from his seat, and setting his back against the door, told her that she must not think of retiring until she had first prayed with them. The poor woman assured him that she could not do that, as she did not know how. "Nay, but," rejoined he, "you must pray;

it is time for you to begin;—at any rate, you must kneel down, and if you cannot pray yourself, I will pray, and you must repeat after me." This the woman attempted to do, Mr. Casson himself being the medium of presenting her petition to the throne of grace, adopting the most forcible and pointed expressions in reference to her state. His friend, well as he had known him, was for the moment disconcerted by this uncommon manœuvre, and stealing into a corner of the room, had at first some little difficulty in retaining his gravity, and was utterly at a loss to conjecture how this strange scene might terminate. Presently, deep conviction seized the stranger, she appeared to see and feel herself a guilty sinner, and no longer needing a prompter, gave vent to the feelings of her soul, in earnest pleadings for salvation. Mr. Kershaw, seeing the happy termination of this eccentric movement, was greatly delighted, and heartily uniting his intercessions with them, they continued to pray for the woman, and not in vain: for before she left the house, she professed to experience peace with God, and they rejoiced together. What was the permanent result, we are not able to ascertain. Trifling as this narration may appear to some, it marks his vivid perception of the value of an immortal spirit. Whilst he had an open hand to relieve the temporal wants of the necessitous, he cared abundantly more for the price

less gem enclosed within the casket; and to him the soul of a beggar was as precious as that of a monarch.

An incident of a similar character has been related by a friend who witnessed it. At a time when he was partially an invalid, at the house of his wife's friends, at Bolton, a poor man came to the door, and solicited alms. He went out, took a copper out of his pocket, and, holding it up, inquired, "Do you ever ask anything of the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Yes," was the reply. "Do you know that you are a sinner?" "No." "Why do you pray, if you are not a sinner?" "I pray that God may prepare me a place of rest." The man not relishing these pointed questions, was anxious to make a retreat, without waiting for the alms; but he called upon him to stop, and gave him what he intended, though it would have given him greater pleasure to have contributed to the salvation of his soul.

In the second year of his ministry in the Brough Circuit, he had a dangerous fit of apoplexy. The following extract from a letter addressed to a pious soldier in the 4th Dragoon Guards, and his wife, with whom he had become acquainted at Penrith, a part of the regiment being quartered there, describes the nature of the attack, and his feelings in his affliction.

"*Brough, December 15th*, 1820.

'DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER AND SISTER LITTLEWORTH,

"PRAISE the Lord! I received your letter, a fort night ago: it was calculated to be as a cordial to my spirit; yea, as balm to my wounds. It is evident we have been formed for society, to sympathise

'And kindly help each other on,
Till all receive the starry crown.'

"May this end be answered; then all will be for ever well. It produced a pleasing sensation in my mind, whilst reflecting that thousands of prayers have been, and still are ascending to the God of all grace in my behalf. Praise the Lord! in answer to ten thousand prayers, my heavenly Father has restored me to middling health again. My affliction has been severe: it was a fit of apoplexy, occasioned, as the doctor said, by violent exertions, which had caused the blood vessels, particularly the smaller ones of the brain, to be overcharged. It appears a small vessel burst, or instant death would have followed. Providentially I had company, or the mortal scene would have closed. If I had then taken flight it would have proved a glorious translation; I should by this time have learned many of the tunes they sing in heaven. [He then describes minutely the nature of the attack,—which had come on whilst he was asleep,—the violence

of his struggles awaking his wife, who immediately sent for medical assistance. After being bled most profusely, he remained for four hours in perfect insensibility.]

"Praise God, I have nearly got to the other side of the furnace; the fire has had a good effect on my immortal part, and I hope soon, in an active sphere, to diffuse light and life around. In my affliction I have had clear evidence of my sanctification; and hope, if I come again to Penrith, to press it more fully upon our members, as I see it to be the privilege of all. I trust the blessed work of perfect love will be carried on more generally than ever. I have not preached yet, but intend to try on Sunday first. May it be in the Holy Ghost and with power. Amen!

"I said last Sabbath-day in the chapel, that as I could not preach I should be glad to see any that would call upon me desiring to know the way to heaven, and I would try to direct them the nearest way. I told them they need not use any ceremonies, or rap at the door,—not even if they were poor and in rags; but lift the sneck, open the door, and come in: and if they could not say anything, I should see by their countenances if they were true penitents. Glory be to God, the invitation was not in vain! Since then we have had several visitors of the above description; my dear wife and I have had many a blessed wrestling with God for peni-

tents; and, praise God, we have had two or three conversions, and one perfected in love this week in our house. God shall have the praise!

"My prayer is, at present, that he will make my soul as a weaned child, and that all his good pleasure may be done in and by me, that in all I may ever say, 'Thy will be done.'

"Dear Solomon and Ann, get more of this perfect love. Strive for all the heights and depths of it. It is our privilege to sit calm upon tumult's wheel. May self be very low at Jesu's feet!—let the whole train of your affections be above, at God's right hand. If you manifest any particular zeal for God's glory, and the salvation of perishing sinners, you will have a whole load of reproach from half-hearted fashionable professors: but never notice them; pray much for them; avoid talking disrespectfully of them, or it will wound your own soul, and answer no good end. Bless God, we have something better to mind! Pray, watch, live, and believe for souls. Give my love to all the warm-hearted friends of Jesus. Farewell. HODGSON CASSON."

We see in the above letter a striking trait in the character of its writer. It is deeply interesting to contemplate the invalided soldier, compelled to fall out of the ranks, still panting for renewed scenes of combat;—impatient to be out of the hospital, and even there laying out the feeble

remains of his strength in prosecuting the glorious warfare.

In accordance with his intention, expressed in the foregoing letter, Mr. Casson resumed preaching on the Sunday evening at Brough. At the conclusion of the sermon he conducted a prayer-meeting. Two or three penitents were seeking salvation: when as though all those lessons which he had received in the school of affliction had been lost upon him, he gave way to the out-breaking of his fervent zeal without restraint. His Superintendent, Mr. Rawson, unexpectedly entered the room; and perceiving the risk which his injudicious young friend was incurring, promptly laid both hands upon his shoulders, conducted him to the singers' pew, and placed him in a corner. When a friend afterwards inquired what were his feelings when Mr. Rawson led him away, "Feel!" he replied, "I felt just like Adam when he was walked out of Paradise."

The labours of Mr. Casson in the Brough Circuit, during the two years he was stationed there, were very successful. Interesting incidents of individual conversion have been related; and gracious outpourings of the Holy Spirit were vouchsafed to some of the country Societies, especially Dufton, Murton, Kirkoswald, and other villages beyond Penrith: so that an increase of 140 members gave satisfactory evidence that he and his colleagues had not laboured

in vain. Several new chapels also were opened, in various places in the country parts of the Circuit.

We shall conclude this chapter with the relation of an anecdote characteristic of the cheerfulness of his disposition, and of the promptitude and readiness of mind which he invariably displayed in shaping a clever and easy rejoinder to any interrogatory which might be put to him. During the period of his residence in this Circuit, a warm election contest for the representation of the county of Westmoreland occurred, and awakened great interest; deep anxiety being felt by the independent electors, that the influence and power of the Lowther family should be curtailed by the return of Henry Brougham, Esq., as their representative in the House of Parliament. Mr. Casson, having by his marriage become possessed of a little freehold property which qualified him to exercise the rights of the elective franchise, presented himself at the polling-booth, and tendered his vote on the popular interest. The clerk, according to the usual form, inquired his name, and then his calling or profession, to which he in a moment replied, "A fisher of men." The clerk hesitated to record an answer so unique, but he persisted in declining to give any other. Mr. (now Lord) Brougham overheard the conversation, and appearing pleased with the designation offered, directed that it should be recorded in the terms in which it had been tendered.

CHAPTER V.

1821.—DUMFRIES.

"THE highest mystery in the Divine rhetoric is, to feel what a man speaks, and then speak what a man feels. The heart best understands the language of the heart."
—DR. STOUGHTON.

AT the Conference of 1821, Mr. Casson was again sent to sow the seed of life in Scotland, being appointed to Dumfries. He had no colleague, Dumfries being a solitary Station. A chapel had been built there in 1788, much superior to the old preaching-house of which Mr. Wesley says in his Journal, "May 14th, 1788.—Such a one I never saw before. It had no windows at all: so that although the sun shone bright, we could see nothing without candles." He applauds the courage of his assistant in "building a preaching-house larger than any in Scotland, except those in Glasgow and Edinburgh;" and concludes, "Robert Dall is a bold man." At that period the prospect of better days might be cheering, but many changes had taken place during the intervening time, until Mr. Casson's arrival in 1821. Sometimes the dew of

Divine influence had descended richly on the hill of Zion; but at other seasons, as on the iron-bound plains of Israel, in the days of Ahab, there was neither dew nor rain, but all seemed withering under a parching drought. Such was the cheerless aspect that presented itself when Mr. Casson reached the spot. The Society had dwindled away to thirty; there was no sound of abundance of rain; the vapours were not risen; no little cloud, like the appearance of a man's hand, was as yet visible. The prophet's confidence might be firm in the rock of his salvation, but the people could see no prospect of help through the medium of one who, notwithstanding his fervent zeal and usefulness, appeared so little calculated to attract a Scottish audience. He opened his commission from Matthew iii. 7:—"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" They looked with astonishment, and were ready to conclude that it was all over with them, and that Conference had sent a man to put the finishing stroke to Methodism in Dumfries. The discouragement was mutual. To Mr. Casson, the appearance of the spiritual horizon was as dark as the chapel was to Mr. Wesley, when he could not see without candles: but he kept in view his leading principle—to save souls, and zealously pursued his course. A brighter day soon dawned, bringing in a glorious revival of the work of God. We prefer quoting his own

account of this, from a letter addressed to the Editor of the Wesleyan Magazine:—

"*Dumfries, May*, 1822.

"THE God of all consolation has visited us in mercy, and his glorious arm has been made bare in the conversion of many souls. At the last Conference, when I knew my appointment to be for Dumfries, I was much discouraged, but was cheered by the animating counsel and fervent prayers of my late colleague Mr. Rawson. When I arrived here I could not find thirty members; yet I felt the word of God as fire in my bones; and, travailing in spirit for the salvation of souls, I believed that God would work graciously amongst us, and was resolved to labour with all my soul and strength. I preached, prayed, and visited wherever I could have an open door; and, in the different neighbourhoods, invited the people to attend. Often have I seen them on such occasions, melted into tears, and by heavy sighs, or broken accents, giving vent to their sorrowful feelings, or crying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Many have been brought to God by such means. I have often felt uncommon unction in preaching, and sometimes could not proceed for weeping. Praised be the Lord! Prayer-meetings have been made very useful here. At first we had only one prayer-meeting during the week; soon we had two, then three. In the beginning of

last month we commenced morning meetings, at five o'clock, and have continued them ever since Sometimes we have fifty or sixty present, and sometimes more, and often we are constrained to say, 'Lord, it is good to be here.' Our congregations are greatly increased on the Sabbath evenings; hundreds have stood at the door, who could not gain admittance. Our number of members has increased from thirty to above one hundred, most of whom declare that they have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. About one hundred children, from ten to fifteen years of age, appear to be under a very gracious influence. This is the Lord's work; to Him be all the praise."

Amongst the number of those who had received spiritual good through his labours, was a Mr. Sleeman, a steward to a gentleman of rank, who resided about twelve miles from Dumfries. He was a native of Cornwall, and, like many of his countrymen, of excitable temperament, but of a very amiable disposition. Prior to Mr. Casson's coming to Dumfries, he does not appear to have had any intercourse with the Methodists there; but a certain congeniality of mind so attracted him to attend upon his ministrations, that the distance above named proved no obstacle to his travelling on foot, every Sunday, both winter and summer to the Methodist chapel. One remarkably wet and

storm, Sunday morning, a little after Mr. Casson had commenced the eight o'clock prayer-meeting service, poor Mr. Sleeman entered the chapel, most thoroughly drenched, the rain literally dripping from his clothes to the floor. The moment Mr. Casson perceived him, he was so overjoyed in spirit, that he could not refrain from clapping his hands and exclaiming aloud, in the broad Cumbrian dialect, "Glory be to God: here's Sleeman again. I think he is like an amphibious animal; he can live either on land or water." The salutation at the moment took the meeting by surprise; but it sprung from a full and glad heart.

Mr. Sleeman, when publicly engaged in devotional exercises, had a peculiar habit of clapping his hands, and spreading them out. This was rather offensive to some of the more sedate members, and was regarded by them as bordering on irreverence. Mr. Casson had learnt the nature of the remarks that had been circulated amongst them, and was anxious to throw over his *protegé* the wing of his protection. An opportunity was soon laid hold of; on the Sabbath morning, as he was giving out the 268th Hymn,

> "In fellowship alone
> To God in faith draw near," &c.,

when he came to the following couplet,

> "And spread your hearts and hands abroad,
> And pray for Zion's peace,"

he remarked, "Some of you find fault with Mr. Sleeman for doing this way," (at the same time imitating the motion,) "but, praise the Lord! Wesley bids him do it: you see it is quite Methodistical." Probably no man but Mr. Casson would have thought of such a defence, and especially from the pulpit. And the zeal of this warm convert was not transient: he persevered in the path of duty for years; and even after his health began to fail, his seat in God's house was not empty. It is not improbable that these extraordinary exertions laid the foundation of that disease which ultimately removed him

> "From a suffering church beneath,
> To a reigning church above."

The end of this good man was a blessed one: he died in the faith. It is understood that on his death-bed he directed that his Bible should be transmitted as a memorial of undying attachment to his beloved friend, and of grateful recollection of the blessings received through his instrumentality. This humble gift was ever afterwards prized as a peculiar treasure.

But Mr. Casson's exertions to save souls were not restricted to the sanctuary: this work to him was never out of season; he was always watching to lay hold of some stray sheep, and conduct it to the fold. One evening, on passing through the

shop of Mr. Bailieff, one of the leading Wesleyans in the place, he observed him in conversation with a commercial traveller from London; and without intending any interruption, casually inquired, "Are you talking about Jesus Christ, and salvation?" and leaving them, proceeded up-stairs, where he was expected to take tea with the family. The two from the shop speedily joined them. His heart was yearning for the stranger, whom, till that time, he had never seen before. According to his usual practice, he soon introduced spiritual conversation, and respectfully asked him, if "he knew that his sins were forgiven;" along with other searching questions of a similar character,—quite new to one whose daily avocations led him to converse on other subjects. Not receiving the most satisfactory replies, Mr. Casson proposed that they should intercede at the throne of grace on his behalf. The gentleman did not relish the offer, and seemed anxious to make the best retreat he could; saying, that he had an appointment to attend to at the bank, at six o'clock, and that it was drawing near to that time. Seeing at once there was not a moment to be lost, Mr. Casson dropped down on his knees, and cried, "Lord bless this man that is going to the bank;" and had not been thus engaged for many seconds ere he was joined by the stranger. After a short but very fervent prayer, the gentleman, upon rising, with tears in his eyes shook him

cordially by the hand, assuring him that he would never forget the interest he had taken in his spiritual welfare. And there is reason to believe that this casual interview was of permanent benefit; as on his future calls on Mr. Bailieff, for many years after, he used to refer to it with great seriousness and feeling.

As a watchman on the walls of Zion, Mr. Casson kept a vigilant look-out; and was always prepared faithfully to blow the trumpet, and warn the people, on the approach of danger. The experience of his own early life, had taught him many an instructive lesson on the fascinating snares, and pernicious consequences, connected with an attendance at wakes, dancing-rooms, races, and other scenes of fashionable dissipation; and hence he was solicitous to guard others from rushing into the vortex of folly, and was ingenious in devising plans to keep those for whom he cared from entering upon enchanted ground. On one occasion, previous to the commencement of the Dumfries races, having to conduct a lovefeast on the Sabbath evening, he made a proposal to his congregation that, upon the condition of their refraining from attending at the races, he would permit them to remain at the lovefeast; and this he represented to them as no small privilege. The greater part of his hearers embraced his offer. It was a season of spiritual refreshment: many found it to be indeed a "privilege" to be there;

and "some who came to scoff, remained to pray." How far those who were admitted strictly adhered to their part of the engagement, it is impossible for us to determine; the laudable object of the preacher, in his attempt to prevent evil, commends itself to the approbation of those who are concerned for the preservation of the purity of public morals.

The adaptation of the itinerant system to promote the efficiency of Methodism, was a principle fully recognised by the Wesleyan Conference at that period. Solitary stations, though not desirable, were allowed in some special cases; but a periodical change with a Preacher of a contiguous Circuit was enjoined. This led to the appointment of Mr. Casson, to exchange occasionally with his brethren in Carlisle, during the first year of his residence at Dumfries; and here he came into friendly contact with some warm-hearted and zealous men, who cheerfully exerted themselves in spreading the work of God. The attachment was reciprocal, and one evidence of their esteem for Mr. Casson, and the value they attached to his ministry, was exhibited in their travelling to Dumfries, a distance of thirty-three miles, more than once, to be present at the lovefeast. The following year, he was directed to change with the Whitehaven Preachers. A letter addressed by him to his old friend Mr. Atkinson, of Carlisle, and written about the period just re-

ferred to, will be read with interest by all who were acquainted with the Christian simplicity which distinguished the writer.

"*Dumfries, Nov.* 13, 1822.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"I WAS thankful for the intelligence you have given us of the prosperity of the work of God where you have been, particularly with brother Rawson. Since I last saw you, I have had some glorious times, especially in Whitehaven Circuit. I spent a month with them, and had a few converts, that I trust will live for ever. Our work is still growing *a little*, but not as when you left us. The month I was from them, they lost much of that fervour which used to be felt and heard in our prayer-meetings, and which they have not recovered since. Preaching will not do, without much fervent prayer. I hope we shall get on again; but lately I have had some dead lifts to take: but if all who could lift a single pound would lift together, we should be able to turn the world upside down: but it is not the case. However, I am determined to struggle on, and rather die than flinch. Mary and child are well: we are all going to heaven.—They send their warmest love. There is not a man in the Connexion that I should like so well to travel with, as my old, well-tried friend, Rawson; and if I do leave Dumfries, I should prefer this: but at present

I know not whether I shall go or stay. In the meantime I am determined to live as if I had to be in heaven before Conference; and yet prepare for the future, as if I had to live a hundred years; yet without anxious care strive to live to-day. I am quite in haste. Give my love to all the devil's enemies. Hope to see you about Christmas: if we knew exactly, we might have a lovefeast then.

"I am yours affectionately,

"HODGSON CASSON."

The following letter is a fine specimen of *Household Words:* it was addressed to a female in one of his old Circuits, who probably occupied a prominent place in some village Society; and the names introduced, appear from their variety to refer to the little group of members composing the church in her house. Every one who was personally acquainted with the writer will discover here a better illustration of that holy piety and zeal, and that Christian simplicity and kindness, which dwelt so eminently within him, than any studied composition can present.

"*Dumfries, December* 19, 1822.

"MY EVER DEAR NANNY,

"MAY grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you, John, Ann, all the weans, James, Nelly, Richard, Sarah, Margaret, old John, &c. I know

you will be glad to hear that your old friend Casson is still alive: yes, praise God, doubly alive, body and soul! My body sometimes feels feeble, as if my soul was too big for it; but I 'have a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.' I was never so near heaven as at present: my union with God increases daily: it is our privilege to live in entire sanctification. Yes, in God! in him to live, breathe, speak, work, pray, and think. Though we may have trials, yet nothing to murmur about. God cannot err: all shall work together for good. And, as it respects our souls, why should we starve in the midst of plenty? Glory to God, all you believe for, you shall have: faith, in exercise, shall remove mountains! Praise God, a few more struggles, and all shall be well! I sometimes imagine myself at your table end, upon the old block, talking about

'Our last triumphant flight,
From Calvary's to Zion's height;'

with the house full to the door. Nanny in the corner, with neckcloth thrown over her head, hands clasped, eyes lifted, tears dropping; crying, 'Glory, glory!' Nelly waiting upon God, saying, 'Amen!' and old Jemmy breathing out, 'Lord grant it!' I shall never forget the seasons, which for hours we have spent together. No, praise God, it is all written in heaven! Tears are all bottled up! Go

on, my friends; we shall meet where tears are for ever wiped away. I hope, nay, I will not doubt, but after all the struggles you have had you are more than conquerors. O, Nanny, look up! the glittering crown awaits you. You will have the least excuse of anybody, if you are not always standing ready; for God has often made the tabernacle shake, and the light of eternal glory has so often broke into the soul, through the cracks of the body. Tell John to hold on. Hope Ann meets in class, and is happy. James is now big enough to be filled with God's love. The two little lasses, I trust, will be wise virgins, with their lamps trimmed. If Jemmy and Nanny are not gone to heaven, they cannot be far from it: perhaps but another struggle, and the shreds of mortality will drop. O, give my love to all as if named! I am quite in haste,—my paper is full, and so is my heart. If by any means I could hear from you, I would be glad; but if we never meet on earth, go on to heaven. You will be sure to meet me there. I will never stop now till I get quite through. Farewell for ever, prays HODGSON CASSON."

During the second year of Mr. Casson's ministry at Dumfries, death entered his happy dwelling, and took away the wife of his youth. She was one of the excellent of the earth; and was well qualified by her intelligence and piety, to fulfil the duties of her

responsible situation. She proved a valuable helpmate to her husband: like him, her happy hours were spent in going about doing good, visiting the sick and poor, admonishing and praying with them, and collecting subscriptions for the Foreign Missions, which labour of love she continued to the last week of her life.* But consumption had marked her for its victim; and though every expedient which medical skill could devise was employed to arrest its progress, yet still it pursued its course. A day or two before her death she was favoured with a powerful application of that promise, "I will circumcise thy heart, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul;" in consequence of which she was enabled more abundantly to rejoice in the God of her salvation. Some of her expressions were, "I am in great pain; but though my heart fails, and my flesh decays, the Lord is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. If I had now, under my heavy affliction, to seek the favour of an angry God, I should despair; but, praised be God, all is well! I find Him lifting up my head: salvation draweth near. We see things in their true colours when on the borders of the eternal world. O, eternity! eternity! Nothing should be thought, said, or done, but in reference to eternity. Glory be to God!

* See Methodist Magazine, vol. xlvi., page 772.

'The world recedes,—it disappears.
Heaven opens on my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring.'

The convoy is waiting. Jesus, my Jesus, is King. Weep not for me, my dear husband: all is well. Soon shall

'All the ship's company meet,
Who sailed with their Saviour beneath.'

Some of us shall escape perhaps on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, but all who get on board and abide in the ship, shall be safely landed on that happy shore. To me an abundant entrance shall soon be ministered: the port appears,

'Angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come.'

I come, Lord! O my Jesus, I come! I praise Thy name that Thou wilt permit such a worm to come to Thee." Her heart-stricken husband had walked with her to the banks of the river: and about ten minutes before she breathed her last, she made signs for him to come near her; when she tenderly embraced him, and gave him her last significant look. He said, "Not for my own satisfaction, but for the sake of those present, I ask, Is all well? Hath death lost its sting, and the grave its victory?" She replied, "Yes, yes! Thanks be to God, who giveth us—giveth *me*—the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is all through Jesus.

Glory, glory,—glory!" Her speech failed: all kneeled down, waiting silently the arrival of the convoy; and almost immediately her happy spirit "escaped to the mansions of light." She left this world of sorrow, March 25th, 1823. Her bereaved husband was now left to pursue his journey alone. Like the patriarch Abraham, when he had lost his Sarah, he prepared to pay the last token of respect to her remains; and, in the place of her fathers' sepulchres, deposited the sleeping dust, to lay in Bolton churchyard till the trumpet of the archangel, on the resurrection-morn, shall awake her out of her slumber. His friend Mr. Atkinson, of Carlisle, was selected to preach her funeral sermon: he had long known her worth, and admired the grace of God that shone forth in her. The following lines, apparently written with a bleeding heart, convey the ardent desire which Mr. Casson felt, that the invitation to perform this kind office of love should be met.

"*Dumfries, April 11th*, 1823.

"MORE THAN EVER DEAR BROTHER,

"As you desired that I should write, I'll now try. When we parted, I wished you would come over to-morrow and help us. I am still of the same mind, only sevenfold more earnest in my request. If *possible, you must come:* the people say

'Come!' the Holy Spirit, with my spirit seconds the motion. Dear brother, hark to Christ and conscience. Do they not agree to say, 'Midford, go. Casson, poor Casson wants help: do go.' And whatever flesh and blood may say, seconded by Satan to the contrary, I hope the Lord will help you to break through all. You have already given us great proof of your interest in our welfare; but still we ask for more: we will cry, 'Come, come, come, come!' and don't say 'Nay.' I strove great part of the way this morning, to recommend the Lord Jesus, but saw very little good effect produced; yet felt satisfaction in my own soul that I had sown the seed, hoping it would not all be lost. Since we came home we have been surrounded with affectionate friends; it is pleasing to see it, but they make me feel. I am almost constrained to say, What mean ye to break my heart? Come in the fulness of the Gospel of peace.

"H. CASSON."

Such an appeal, dictated by purest friendship and true Christian feeling, was irresistible: his friend felt that he could not do otherwise than respond to it. In the name of his Master he went to the house of mourning, and the blessing of God accompanied his attempt to improve the solemn event. But "weeping did not hinder sowing." For another year and upwards, after the bereave-

ment he had sustained, he continued his labours in this part of the Lord's vineyard, "weeping and bearing precious seed." No wonder that he felt deeply attached to the soil: many pleasing associations endeared it to his heart. For the space of three years he toiled hard to cultivate a field, which at first appeared unpromising, but was ultimately studded with trees of righteousness. He had the satisfaction of leaving at the Conference in 1824, a Society of 125 members, where he had found only thirty. One of those for whom he cared so tenderly, and who still continues to flourish as a green olive-tree, was Mary Rigg. She was one of his household plants; and, in his own nursery, was under his more immediate inspection,—having for some time resided in his family as maid-servant. She was afterwards married to James Rigg, of Dumfries. She knew well Mr. Casson's manner of life, and how he walked before his house in a perfect way; and could unhesitatingly testify, "O, he was a good man!" She remembers how he spent a great part of his time upon his knees; and how, like his divine Master, he would rise a great while before day, and sometimes even continue all night in this blessed exercise. Is not this the key that unlocks the secret of his great success in winning souls? But we have introduced this short notice to prepare the way for the insertion of the following sweet and touching letter, which he addressed

to her, from the Circuit to which he was removed, when he left Dumfries:—

"*Reeth, June 7th*, 1825.

"DEAR MARY,

"MAY everything that is worth having in both worlds be communicated to thee and thine. Amen. Poor lass! it gladdens my heart to hear my little Mary is still holding on her way to the New Jerusalem. Let nothing—no nothing—not even frowns from pewholders, shy looks from professed friends, nor troubles, nor trials you may have to pass through, ever prevent you from following your late mistress over the banks of the river. When all together, we had many heart-cheering, heart-reviving, heart-rejoicing times: some of the little company are gone; I am determined to follow, and would almost feel sorry in heaven not to meet you there. In every changing circumstance through life you may expect to find disappointments; but in and through all, our compassionate Lord God has promised to give strength to Mary Rigg according to her day.

'In every temptation will give her to prove,
His utmost salvation, His fulness of love.'

James and you will have need of much patience, one with the other; but where there is much love to God and to each other, patience will never be

worn out. You must obey your husband in the Lord,—make and mend his clothes,—always be employed. Spend little time in neighbours' houses. Tell your particular trials to nobody but your husband. Ever live in union with God. If I had wrote to James, I would say, 'Take care of dear little Mary, and love her as Christ loved the church; and when this is the case, you will not be sorry to toil over hill and dale, to earn a little to cover the back, and fill every necessary want.' If I had you together, I would say, 'Never speak slightly of each other while absent, nor in company,—not even in jest,—lest it ripen into earnestness, and the devil should tempt you to say to each other words that you will wish had never been said when death parts.' You must both pray in family prayer: every day let it be your constant business to draw each other into God; then you will have two heavens: God will bless in body and soul, in time and in eternity. Praise the Lord, my health of late, and at present, has been and is good; my soul truly alive, and my strength and talents all engaged in fishing men! My partner is a good helpmate; makes a good wife and mother: at present middling in health,—soul very happy,—and endeavouring to be useful in the church. Sister Bella is tolerable, and keeps praying away. Children are all well: they sometimes hold prayer-meetings amongst themselves,—sing and shout with all their

might. At present Miss Dent is with us, middling in health, and happier in mind than ever you saw her. As a family, we are daily living in love and harmony.

'Our day is spent in doing good,
Our night in praise and prayer.'

I have just come home, after being ten days in the Circuit, well tired; but this voyage the Lord has given me several souls. May they be as stars in my crown in eternity! The good work is still going on: I hope it will never stand still, till the ends of the earth shall see His salvation. I am in great haste, and Nancy is going off in the morning. I have not time to write to any but yourself. Give our love to everybody.

"I am yours, affectionately yours,

"HODGSON CASSON."

We have given this letter at full length, as a characteristic delineation of Mr. Casson in the bosom of his family. In his second marriage, as in his first, he was the same happy man. David Hume has said he never knew a religious man whose presence did not cast a melancholy gloom around him. But he never knew Hodgson Casson: he never saw that smiling countenance, lit up with radiant beams of celestial sunshine, inspiring holy, heavenly delight, throughout the circle where he moved. When he came out of his chamber in the

morning, "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," his full heart would give vent to the emotions within, in strains like these: "Praise the Lord, my soul is happy! I have been above sun, moon, and stars this morning." And then, striking up one of his favourite tunes, he would break forth, singing and making melody in his heart,—

> "The opening heavens around me shine,
> With beams of sacred bliss," &c.

And in this atmosphere he breathed continually, happy and cheerful as the lark through the live-long day, diffusing a hallowing cheerfulness around him. He banished all gloomy feelings by the sweet serenity of his spirit, and the sprightliness of his conversation; making

> "E'en thick-lip'd musing melancholy
> To gather up her face into a smile,
> Before she was aware."

It cannot be matter of surprise, then, that his home should be a peculiarly happy one. No family jars, no discordant strife, embittered the domestic circle: it was the hallowed sanctuary of delightful repose; it charmed the ear as with the harmonious concert of inspiring music, where every note is in tune. May we not suppose that angels, those "ministering spirits," in their visits to earth, may linger near such impressive scenes, and rejoice to find even here so close an approximation to their own blissful homes above?

CHAPTER VI.

1824.—RICHMOND AND REETH.

"BENT on such glorious toils,
The world to him was loss;
Yet all his trophies, all his spoils,
He hung upon the cross."

MONTGOMERY

AT the Conference of 1824 Mr. Casson was appointed to the Richmond and Reeth Circuit, his residence being in the latter place. The change was one to which the itinerant life is exposed; his new Circuit being directly the reverse of the one which he had left. He had looked upon his residence in Dumfries as a season of comparative rest; and now, rising up like a giant refreshed with his slumber, he was prepared to deal more deadly blows against Satan's kingdom. The Circuit was a type of those of primitive times. Every month he had to be absent from his home for eight or ten days together, had several miles to walk daily, and preach in the evening: but he smiled at toil and pain; and to save souls from death he was ready,

"In the furthest ditch,
To battle or to die."

The spirit and manners of the inhabitants of the dale were equally primitive: the children of toil, they had to procure a hard-earned subsistence by labouring in the lead-mines, so that their opportunities of acquiring intellectual knowledge were exceedingly limited; but there was a vigorous, healthy tone of piety, existing in the hearts of the people, often finding expression in language, if not chaste and elegant, yet warm, glowing, and melting.

It was a circumstance favourable to Mr. Casson that he had been preceded by his old friend and Superintendent, Mr. Rawson. When they parted company with each other three years before, they had separated—one to the country on the left hand, the other to the right; and both, in their respective spheres of labour, had been owned by the Great Head of the church. But in a most eminent manner had the Richmond Circuit been signalised by one of the most glorious revivals which had ever been known in those dales. Mr. Rawson entered on his work full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost: he laid down his plans with great wisdom, and carried them out with determined energy,—first by seeking to get the holy fire kindled afresh in the officers of the church, and then by bringing them into action; having his "*firemen*," as he termed them, conveniently planted, ready to rush in wherever their

services might be needed, not, indeed, to extinguish, but to blow up the flame, wherever a spark was visible. So confident was he of the approach of an extraordinary visitation of the Spirit of convincing grace, that before others could discern the indications of its coming, he had taken care to have about 500 notes of admission ready, to receive the expected new members into the Society. And the event proved that his faith in God, and in the power of the Gospel, had not been ill-founded; for in the Reeth side of the Circuit alone, the numbers had increased from 400 to upwards of 900 souls.

These things taken into account, the appointment of Mr. Casson was a seasonable one. He was the very man to shepherd the flock thus collected by his predecessor. He was well acquainted with his plans, and was prepared to carry them out in a vigorous and energetic manner, for the yet greater extension of this blessed work. And notwithstanding the history of revivals in the church has, in numerous instances, recorded the painful fact, that a sudden augmentation of numbers has often been succeeded by a rapid falling off of the new converts; yet a reference to the Minutes of Conference will show, that this was so far from being the case during the three following years of Mr. Casson's ministry, that a further increase of more than one hundred members in the Circuit is reported.

Mr. Casson soon understood how to accommodate

himself to the manners of his flock. He studied human nature. He knew that the attention of men must first be secured, before the truth could have its full play upon them; and this led him to search out the most likely means of reaching the understandings of his hearers, and thus finding his way to their hearts. He soon noticed the great delight which the lead-miners took in singing: he was just the man to meet their tastes. He himself had a sweet tenor voice; and had, moreover, a rich store of sacred song, having exercised no greater scrupulosity in robbing Satan of his music than of his subjects. He introduced a number of popular airs, accommodated in some cases to our own hymns, but not unfrequently to poetical strains more to be admired for their unadorned simplicity than for the superior quality of the poetry. Without pretending to justify the indiscriminate admission of this class of airs and hymns into public worship, yet there may be a possibility of exercising too much of a fastidious spirit on this point. If traditionary report be credited, more than one of the most celebrated bards of which Wesleyan hymnology can boast, have, in passing a theatre or concert-room, been so struck with the sweetness of the music, as to be induced to compose some of our finest hymns, to chime in with those captivating strains. And, we question, whether, if some of the scrupulous objectors to the practice referred to, had

been present in some of those lovefeasts or prayer-meetings, where Mr. Casson and his joyous band were joining "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," their happy countenances lit up with seraphic ardour, they themselves would have been able to refrain from singing in the same measures—

"I have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."

About three months after his arrival at Reeth, he reports the success of his exertions in the following extract of a communication, addressed to one of his old friends at Dumfries:—

"*Reeth, November* 24, 1824.

"EVER DEAR ——,

"* * * My health is good,—my soul happier than ever,—my time and talents fully occupied: work hard, but hitherto have strength to my day. I heard from Tibby,* that congregations were increasing, and others joining,—of the leaders labouring to keep up the meetings,—which gladdened my heart not a little: may it never be pained by hearing bad news from that garden in which I laboured for three years. May every plant flourish, and every weed be plucked and burned. Amen! * * * I have not missed one appointment since I came,—have preached between thirty and forty times every month,—and sung, and prayed, almost

* Mrs. Borthwick, of Dumfries.

without ceasing, night after night. After rolling the stone from the grave's mouth, the Lord commands sinners to come forth, and we help them off with their grave-clothes till midnight, and sometimes later. We have often three or four, and sometimes ten converted in a meeting. Last Monday night I was at a place where there were thirteen in Society, and now nearly forty, and the greater part of them soundly converted to God. Last Monday, at noon, I heard of a number of men that wrought in a paper-mill, near Richmond, playing at cards, in their dinner-hour. I took a person with me, and went immediately, rushed in upon them, and caught them in the very act: they were all confounded, and threw their cards aside, acknowledging their folly. We sung, preached, and prayed with them till time for work again, and left them much affected. I hope they will in future hold prayer-meetings rather than shuffle cards. The rest I got during my stay with you has been a means of establishing my health, and preparing me for the arduous labour of this Circuit. I hope to have strength according to my day, and my strength and work will cease together. O, the delightful work of saving souls cheers me every day! * * *

"H. CASSON."

Soon after Mr. Casson's arrival in the Richmond Circuit, he entered a second time into the marriage

state, the object of his choice being Mrs. Smith, a young widow lady of Workington. She possessed a strong and vigorous mind, with deep and fervent piety. For twenty-six of the remaining years of his pilgrimage they walked hand in hand together, and he found in her a pleasant and cheerful companion as he travelled to Mount Zion; and one who heartily laboured in her own sphere of action, to promote the prosperity of that cause which she dearly loved.

Reference has been made in the preceding chapters, to his determined opposition to sinful amusements, some distinguished instances of which were furnished in this Circuit. In many of the villages it had long been an annual custom to hold what are popularly termed "feasts," leading to the introduction of wrestling, dancing, dog trails, races, and a variety of similar scenes of a demoralising tendency. His venerated predecessor had taken a bold stand against these corrupting practices; and, supported by a select band of Local Preachers, had, with considerable success, introduced a variety of religious services, to draw the people away from the enticing paths of dissipation. Mr. Casson vigorously carried on the same public opposition to the kingdom of Satan,—much to the annoyance of those persons especially, who had been accustomed to derive unhallowed gain at these seasons of festivity, and who now perceived their craft to be in danger.

And though he had for a while to encounter the effects of their resentment, yet he resolutely turned the battle to the gate, till he gained the victory, and his opponents were completely beaten off the field. Had the same policy been afterwards pursued with equal determination, the vantage ground thus gained might have been permanent. Amongst many instances of a similar character which might be related, reference may be made to one which took place at Aldborough, a country village about seven miles from Richmond. It was the time of their annual feast,—celebrated with its full quota of such scenes of revelry as have just been alluded to. A band of itinerant musicians, (who had been driven by the decay of trade in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire, thus to appeal to the benevolence of their countrymen,) happened to be in the place. About two o'clock in the afternoon, Mr. Casson, accompanied by a handful of courageous followers, sallied forth to attempt to stem the overflowing torrent, and taking his stand in the open street, commenced by singing a hymn. A number of persons speedily collected,—some drawn by curiosity others by determined hostility. Two young men of the more respectable class, had undertaken to head the opposition; but arriving on the spot, their courage deserted them. The musicians were then engaged, that the sound of their instruments might drown the voice of the preacher, or that the charms of

music might present a more powerful attraction to the people. They approached; but as though overawed by the benignant aspect of the man of God, like Saul, when meeting the company of the prophets, "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied also,"—so they struck in with their instruments to aid the harmony of the singing, and the intended opponents of the heroic messenger of the cross were enlisted as powerful auxiliaries. After he had prayed, Mr. Casson deeply interested the crowds that surrounded him, with his favourite subject on such occasions,—an exposition of Moses's choice, from Hebrews xi. 24, &c. Though the expected leaders of the opposition had given way, the fury of the rabble was not wholly subdued: eggs and other missiles came pouring in from one quarter or another, yet they reached not the preacher; but his noble-minded wife, to whom he had been recently married, standing courageously by him, received on the top of her shoulder one of those honourable badges of distinction intended for her husband. After the open-air service was concluded, with singing they proceeded to the usual place of worship, there to offer up many earnest supplications for those who needed pardoning mercy.

Mr. Casson's fame as a revivalist led to his receiving frequent invitations to lend his aid in promoting the revival of the work of God in neighbouring Circuits. An interesting account of one

of those visits, which he paid to Masham, in the Bedale Circuit, in November, 1825, is furnished by one who was an eye-witness.*

"In the evening Mr. Casson came from Tanfield, weary; and, as he said, he could have done without the night's work before him. In the prayer-meeting, his singing had a powerful influence. The last lines of the first hymn which he sung, whenever I think of them, make melody in my heart:—

'With glittering millions we shall join
In glory. Hallelujah.
And praise the Prince of David's line
In glory. Hallelujah.'

Though dismissed, the people would not go away. He stood a moment or two in deep silence, and then began by singing. He observed, 'If any are desirous of salvation, let them come forward and kneel down, and we will pray with them.' A respectable female came from the crowd, and knelt down at his feet. Several followed. I never before witnessed such a scene. Some souls obtained salvation, and many were determined to live for God.

"On Monday Miss W. came to our house. Mr. Casson said, 'Now, you are happy?' 'Indeed I am very miserable,' said she. 'Miserable, and a smiling countenance!' 'Well,' she replied, 'I often smile when I could cry.' She then began to weep.

* Memoirs of Mrs. Broadbelt.

He prayed, and said to her, 'You would not take anything for the hope you have in Jesus. Now, turn about, and look directly at Christ, till you feel his love in your heart.' Miss W. went home, meditating on the love of Christ, till about noon, when her soul was set at perfect liberty. In the afternoon she came, and with uplifted hands and eyes to heaven, she exclaimed, 'Jesus is mine, and I am his.' This was a moment of exceeding great joy."

Mr. Casson shared in this joy, and, a few weeks afterwards, gave vent to the happy feelings of his soul in a letter addressed to the amiable female, whose pencil has depicted the above interesting scene.

"*Reeth, December* 22, 1825.

"MY DEAR SISTER,

"MY heart's desire and prayer to Almighty God is, 'O Lord, direct Ann Burnell to glorify thee, and bless Masham! Amen.' Yesterday, when I came home, my heart danced for joy, on finding and reading your epistle. My Master, the Lord Jesus, must have all the praise for the good that has been, and is still going on amongst you. Whatever we do without Him, is nothing to any good purpose; and would to God that all Preachers, Leaders, and Members fully understood this great truth,—that we conquer earth, hell, men, devils, and all that is opposed to us, by believing in Jesus. Faith re-

moves mountains; resists the devil; conquers the world; makes weak people strong; such as know nothing, wise; such as have nothing, to possess all things;—makes them willing to be fools for Christ's sake; 'content if he exalted be.' The heathen rage, the people imagine vain things; but faith triumphs, and shouts—Glory, glory be to God! all shall work together for good to them that believe. Tell Miss W. to hold on her profession without wavering. J. P. has not yet got all: tell him to go on. Am glad that all our struggles for Mary were not in vain: tell her to meet me at God's right hand in glory. I hope John C. will strip and work like a man of God; pray not only so as the people may be pleased, but bring thunder and lightning from Sinai into sinners' consciences,—bring the immediate sunshine of the opening heavens of God's smiling face, to a broken, and contrite, despairing spirit. * * * *

"O, my dear sisters, you must all become workers together with God! Don't stand looking and thinking what is the best way, and the most pleasing to flesh and blood, whilst time passes and nothing is done. Now, and ever, use such means as you would to get a sleeping family out of a house in flames. You would not stand and reason with the bystanders whether to get them out of the back window secretly, or publicly out of the front. 'No, no!' you would say, 'Let us have them out any

way; and it must be done now.' And if the inmates consisted of travellers not related to each other, but who had come to tarry for a night, in this case the first stranger you got hold of you would pluck him out, never inquiring whether he were of a respectable family or not: you would consider each one saved as a brand plucked from the burning. You must make the application.

"I see where you are in danger. You have been, and perhaps still are, looking for a revival amongst a certain class of people, who have long been hearers, and almost persuaded to become Methodists. In the meantime God breaks the hearts of some ragamuffins: they cry aloud, but you are afraid to enter into the apparent confusion, lest those you have had under your eye so long, should slip away disgusted, concluding you are all mad, and what is most surprising is, that Mrs. B., a sensible lady, should join in the uproar! Permit me to relate an anecdote. The last Circuit I was in, I visited one place which had long been very low. I went, determined to kill or cure,—laid on, as some of them said, unmercifully, and cracked the pulpit. An old respectable lady, that had been a constant hearer for more than thirty years, and was a great support to the cause by her donations, ran out of the chapel terrified. Poor Casson was doomed to Bedlam by professor and profane. The Methodists said they were ruined,—their best

friend was gone; the wicked laughed, and said, 'They will come to nought.' The consequence was, hundreds came that never came before; sometimes there were more at the outside of the chapel than within; souls got converted, so that in a little time the Society was increased to more than threefold; and all originated with old Mrs. C. running away, as if her clothes were on fire. Praise the Lord, since I left you, I have seen about ten or twelve public conversions. My health is only middling. Every day brings fresh work: I have plenty of good work, and good wages. My family are well. I am in great haste.

"Yours affectionately,
"HODGSON CASSON."

A number of incidents which occurred in this Circuit have been communicated to his biographer, illustrative of his faithfulness at the visitation of the classes; the homely, yet earnest manner, in which he enforced the duty of private prayer; his Christian liberality in relieving the temporal necessities of the sick, at the same time that he was labouring for the salvation of their souls; his kind sympathy with the poor members of Christ's flock, cheerfully offering to pay their ticket-money when their straitened circumstances disheartened them from meeting the Preacher to receive the token of church-membership; and his condescending spirit

to little children, in familiarly conversing with them, and lending them a clue to the Saviour. A repetition of instances of this kind may be considered unnecessary, his deportment in one Circuit being a type of his general spirit and behaviour in another; so that not here only, but in every place where he laboured, by these acts of kindness, little as they may appear in themselves, he has planted an imperishable memorial in the hearts of those who knew him.

A striking instance of the success of his faithful admonitions, directed against profane sinners, is well deserving of special record. One fine Sabbath morning, in the spring of 1826, when on the way to his regular appointment at Hipswell, a small country village not far from Richmond, and accompanied by one of his zealous supporters, who was often his travelling companion on such occasions, they came up to a number of young men who were playing a game at cricket, in a field adjoining the high-road, with their coats and hats off thrown in a heap within the gate. Shocked by this unblushing defiance of law, both human and divine, Mr. Casson entered the field, and proceeding to the heap, took up an old hat and coat, calling aloud to the daring violators of the sanctity of God's holy day,—"Lads, don't you know that this is the Sabbath-day?" The owner of the hat and coat, aroused by his interference with their sports, responded by taking up

a stone, and warning the bold reprover, that if he did not immediately lay down those clothes, he would let it fly at his head. Mr. Casson's friend advised him to be cautious how he meddled with that man, as he was a chimney-sweep, and one of the most dangerous characters in the place. He was not intimidated, but resolutely refused to give the man his hat and coat unless he would promise to come to the Methodist chapel that night. It was not difficult for an open violator of God's law to break one commandment any more than another; so that he accepted the proposed condition, though without the slightest intention of performing it. The clothes were restored with this solemn admonition:—"Now, remember you have promised to attend the Methodist chapel; and if you do not, I will meet you at the bar of God." This went like a dagger to his heart, and he returned to his habitation truly miserable. The Holy Spirit of God sent home the faithful warnings: the recollection of the promise made to the preacher disturbed his guilty conscience; and when the hour for attending at the chapel drew on, he felt as though he could not resist the impulse to go. Ashamed of his mean apparel, and dreading lest any one should suspect the business he was going upon, he went round about by a back way to the chapel, and entered as stealthily as possible, hiding his guilty head in an obscure corner under the gallery. At six o'clock

Mr. Casson commenced the service, and, whilst he was giving out the first hymn, conviction seized the Sabbath-breaker's heart. "I sweat," he said, "from head to foot. I thought the preacher was telling the people all about me, and I tried to get out of the chapel again and again, but I could not." A prayer-meeting was announced; but the man slipped out with the crowd, and returned to his dwelling,—but only to carry with him a guilty conscience, which disturbed him day and night, making him truly miserable. He continued in this state of penitential pain throughout the ensuing week, until the following Sabbath, when God spoke peace to his soul, and filled him with joy through believing. This was the turning over of a new leaf in the man's future history: the once degraded sweep began to ascend higher and higher in the scale of society, until he reached an elevation at which he never would have arrived, had it not been for religion His wife participated in the same gracious change,—his family was trained up in the fear of God,—and he eventually became a Local-Preacher and Class-Leader. He still lives to sustain these honourable offices, and to acknowledge Hodgson Casson, under God, as his spiritual father.

Strong and robust as Mr. Casson's frame naturally was, yet his excessive labours in this Circuit preyed seriously upon his constitution, and led to a more frequent repetition of those epileptic fits to which

he had been previously subject. These painful attacks sometimes seized him in the pulpit, suddenly overpowering him. Once, whilst holding a watch-night service in Reeth, his Superintendent, the Rev. H. Stephenson, being with him, he became unconscious of what he was doing, and was obliged to stop in the middle of his prayer; and, after a few minutes he recovered, but had to retire with a pallid hue on his countenance, like a saint on the verge of glory. Distressing as these attacks were to his friends who witnessed them, to himself they were no subject of alarm. Living as in the suburbs of heaven, he viewed these visitations with a mind calm and undisturbed, and spoke without any terror or dismay of their being the harbingers of dissolution; telling his friends that they need not be surprised if they should find him dead some morning, or lying by the roadside; but if so, his soul would have winged its way to glory. Indeed, he was always at home when conversing about his Father's house, and would often remark, "The best way to make heaven sure is to carry it along with you: you may have heaven *in* the way, heaven *all* the way, and heaven at the *end* of the way." Such was the spirituality of his mind, that it was impossible to be long in his company without perceiving that he was a man of no ordinary piety: the general theme of his conversation was Christ Jesus the Lord: he mingled thanksgiving and

prayer with every meal, and thus ate his bread with singleness of heart. He continued his happy and successful toils in this Circuit until the Conference of 1827, living in the hearts of a simple yet affectionate people.

CHAPTER VII.

1827, 1828, 1829.—GATESHEAD.

"ENTHUSIAST, fanatic, and fool,
Many who read thy life will style thee
And others, more sedate and cool,
Will pity, who dare not revile thee."

B. BARTON.

AT the Conference of 1827, by the appointment of Mr. Casson to Gateshead, he was removed to a sphere of action widely different from any preceding station which he had occupied. Leaving the inhabitants of the dales in their scattered dwellings, where they were comparatively shut out from much of that contaminating influence, which, like a moral pestilence, stalks along in places more densely populated, poisoning the life-blood of society, he had now, in the order of Providence, to plant his battering-rams in a place "where Satan's seat" was; where bold unblushing infidelity was not ashamed to show herself unmasked; and where vice in all its disgusting and hideous deformity, reigned on every hand. In the midst of a population of 14,000 souls in the town, and the swarming hives that abound in an

extended colliery district, he had a wide range for spiritual employment, and entered upon it with an earnestness and vigour which no opposition could intimidate, and no supine indifference could cool. His soul seemed to rise with the greatness of his work,—he was stimulated to yet mightier efforts,—and in no place had he to sing of more abundant success. The field of sanctified labour became the honoured scene of holy triumph, and the trembling gates of hell shook under those powerful assaults which he successfully made on Satan's kingdom.

In accepting the invitation to this Circuit, he was satisfied that he had followed the moving of the 'pillar of cloud and fire," and that he was in the place where God would have him to be. His colleague was the Rev. Joseph Mann, to whom he became greatly attached. In his usual happy way of innocently playing upon the names of his associates, he describes him as "a *man* of God, an excellent yoke-fellow." Their united labours were very soon signally crowned by the Great Head of the Church. In a letter to Mr. Atkinson, October 13th, 1827, he says:—'The first Sabbath I spent here, we had brother Joseph Mortimer with us, on his way to Shetland: he gave us a famous lift, and we had not less than twenty souls converted to God. This was a blessed beginning, and still the work is going on in town and country. At our Quarter-day, all was

love and harmony, not a single string out of tune. We had given seventy-three notes on trial. The blessed work is still going on. We seldom have a meeting but part of our work is to pray over penitents, and often they get truly set at liberty. My colleague has charity enough to bear with all my infirmities, and puts the best construction on my proceedings. I hope the Lord will make us like Caleb and Joshua this year, in leading a few hundreds of souls from the county of Durham into the kingdom of God. Mr. Mann and I have had meetings every night in the month but two since we came. I have found the labour hard, and sometimes my strength nearly exhausted; but when revived again have found my soul as warm as ever in fishing men out of the devil's pond. May we all have strength according to our day in this delightful work, till the Lord says, 'It is enough: well done, good and faithful servant!' Amen and amen!"

To the same import he writes to a Christian lady in Dumfries, October 17th:—"Since we came we have had a blessed work; we have seldom a prayer-meeting but penitents are crying aloud for mercy, and a goodly number have got converted to God. I have, this week, seen nearly a dozen souls saved. I never felt more given up to God, nor more passive in his hands, willing either to do or suffer all his righteous will. I cannot choose, and He cannot err. My soul daily cries, 'Lord, thy will be done!'

Praise the Lord, the religion I recommend to others, I daily feel myself, namely, perfect love filling and ruling my heart."

When in the Gateshead Circuit, Mr. Casson may be regarded as having been in the zenith of his popularity and usefulness. By many he was considered as one of the most popular preachers in the north of England; and that his ministry was highly appreciated, not because of his eccentricities, but for the rich and holy unction which attended it, appeared by the crowds that flocked over the water from Newcastle, to hear him, many of whom ranked high for intelligence and sound discrimination. A little incident, inconsiderable in itself, will illustrate the high estimation in which he was held in this neighbourhood. Two gentlemen were travelling in the same public conveyance; when one of them, having learned in the course of conversation that his fellow-traveller came from Cumberland, very laconically inquired, "Can you send us another Hodgson Casson from your county? for the one you have sent us is worth his weight in gold." Mr. Casson felt the responsibility of his position, and gave himself to study, meditation, and prayer. Conscious that the same style of preaching that was adapted to win the hearts and cheer the spirits of the plain unsophisticated dwellers in the dales, would not be calculated to tell upon his Gateshead congregation, he laboured hard to improve his mental qualifications, that he

might show himself a "workman needing not to be ashamed." A remarkable change also took place in his physical system. His new friends were soon aware of those sufferings, through the frequent attacks of the fits of epilepsy already alluded to, which had so often impeded him in the discharge of his ministerial duties in his last Circuit; and they sought to obtain a remedy, by means which would no doubt be congenial to his own views. They relied on the power and goodness of Him who has the kingdom of nature under his control. His case was made a subject of prayer throughout the Circuit; petitions upon petitions, sincere and fervent, ascended before the throne of Him who heareth and answereth prayer; and it is a well-authenticated fact, that for the latter two years and three quarters of his residence in that Circuit, he had not one repetition of his malady, and left it with a strong healthy body, and a happy soul. Let the sceptic or the subtle philosopher account for this on natural principles; the Christian can go a nearer way to work, when he attributes it to the "wondrous power of faithful prayer." With renewed vigour he consecrated all the powers of body and soul to the great work for which he lived,—the salvation of his fellow-men.

The description of the lamentable state of public morals, which has just been given, as existing in the town, is equally applicable to the surrounding

villages. About four miles from Gateshead, is the large and populous village of Swalwell, where the principal part of Crawley and Co.'s extensive iron works are situated, employing a considerable number of workmen in the manufacture of anchors, anvils, chain cables, and, in short, almost every kind of work in which iron and steel are used. The moral condition of the men was proverbially bad. To this place, soon after his arrival, Mr. Casson bent his course one fine autumnal Sabbath, after having preached at Burnop Field in the morning. Entering Swalwell, at Miller's Bridge, he came up to a group of idlers, who were lounging about, manifesting no disposition to hallow the sacred day. He drew up his horse, and inquired if they knew that the time they were thus wasting was holy, and ought to be employed in acts of piety; and then faithfully remonstrated with them on their shameless misconduct, as a reckless act of self-destruction, and an insult to God the Creator. To a man, they treated his admonitions with an indifference, which none could have displayed but men grown bold in sin, scarcely deigning to afford him a glance of recognition, or a moment's attention. In the evening, whilst dealing out the thunders of the law in his own peculiarly pointed manner, he referred distinctly to the sad evidence of relaxed morality which had met his eyo in their own village. Reports of this public reprehension soon reached the ears of those

men who had been deaf to the voice of kindness, and led them to entertain purposes of revenge—equally mean, ignorant, and inhuman—against the bold reprover; resolving that the next time he came that way they would unite in stoning him. This diabolical purpose was frustrated, in a manner to them unexpected. One of the party who had entered into this combination was suddenly arrested on the following day by an alarming stroke of disease, which extracted from him a disclosure of their wicked intentions. The strength of the man wasted daily, whilst his conscience inflicted upon him terrible retribution, and memory recalled a life of crimes. Altered circumstances had rendered a blind and worthless scepticism utterly unavailing. New light seemed to fall from the Eternal. The past was overcast with guilty gloom; the future suggested apprehensions the most fearful. To employ the language of a French writer, "it was not a trifling declaimer, or a religious book, but the last enemy himself who had become the preacher." In this sad hour, trembling and amazed, the dying unbeliever realised the meaning of the lines—

"Death—'tis a melancholy day
To those who have no God;
When the poor soul is forced away
To seek her last abode."

The alarmed sufferer was glad to avail himself of the kind solicitude of some of his neighbours, who

knew the Lord Jesus Christ, he earnestly entreated them to supplicate the throne of mercy on his behalf, at the same time disclosing to a pious Class-Leader, Mr. John Spence, his guilty purpose in reference to God's messenger. He deeply repented of his wickedness, and prayed that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him. It is believed that Mr. Casson was a visitor at this death-bed scene. The contrition of the heart-stricken penitent was a sad discomfiture to his former associates, and gave rise to much malignant feeling. Some of them approached his bed-side, and, in a spirit worthy of the murderer of souls, clinched their hands, and stigmatized him as a coward, who had irreparably disgraced himself by submitting to the degradation (as they regarded it) of prayer. A Class-Leader who watched with him, endeavoured to calm his agitated spirit, by proclaiming the mercy offered to repentant sinners; and there was sufficient reason to hope, that before he left the world he obtained salvation through the blood of the Cross. This solemn event disconcerted the association of unbelievers, and, for a time, Sunday-gaming appeared to be abandoned. But the pointed and faithful rebukes of the preacher were neither soon forgotten nor forgiven, by some of the more desperate of these wicked sinners. On a subsequent Sabbath, a company of these scorners began to hoot and hiss at him; and one man took up a stone, with

an evident determination to throw it at the preacher. He drew up his horse, and solemnly said, "Now, my lads, remember the last hours of W. T.:" and with tender earnestness entreated them not to face death, with a load of unpardoned guilt upon their souls. It is pleasing to add, that several of these very men began to attend Mr. Casson's ministry, and were made the subjects of a work of saving grace: from these stones were raised up "children unto Abraham;" from having been furious persecutors, they became his warmest admirers, and most attached friends; and his affection towards them was abundant and permanent: in his own happy phraseology, when adverting to them in correspondence with his friends, he calls them his "Swalwell darlings!"

An interesting account of a subsequent visit to the place is furnished by one of his friends, who accompanied him, and stands in fine contrast with the picture above presented:—"I can never forget," says Mr. Atkinson, "the Sabbath evening when I was with him at Swalwell. No doubt his former ministry had been preparing the way for such a pentecostal visitation. The great day alone can fully demonstrate its effects, when ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, will be singing, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' No

doubt, there will be many from Swalwell in that glorious throng. The high-sounding, sweet, and melodious notes of Mr. Casson's hallelujahs, with all his 'Swalwell darlings' who have departed in the faith, or may yet leave the world in triumph, will add to the swell of the celestial host, in singing the 'song of Moses and the Lamb.' We had many triumphant notes on that evening to which I refer. He appointed me to retain my position in the singers' pew, amongst the penitents, selecting them out of a dense congregation, and handing them over to me. There was then no gallery, and the chapel was crowded to excess. In less than an hour's devotional exercises, about thirty penitents found peace with God. He was transported with joy, and with a loud voice, in the ecstasy of an over-joyed heart, shouted to me, 'Now, are you satisfied?' I could only reply by inquiring if there were any more penitents. I have been present with him at many a refreshing and reviving season, but never met with anything equal to this."

The recollection of those "days of grace," with which Gateshead was visited during the ministry of Messrs. Mann and Casson, is still precious in the hearts of those few surviving friends who were eye-witnesses of them. It will be no less pleasing than satisfactory, to have a condensed view of his labours and success from his own pen, in a letter addressed to his friend, the late Mr. William Dalton, of Middleton:—

"*Gateshead, April 9th*, 1828.

DEAR BROTHER,

"* * * I HAVE no doubt but the pillar and cloud have been my guide, in moving me to the north. At my first entrance into this black quarry, it was so hard that the hammer bounced, and little was heard but its hollow sound; yet I was not discouraged, but continued stroke after stroke, till the hammer-shaft was nearly broken; nature was almost exhausted; then, Jacob-like,

'When my all of strength did fail,
I did with the God-man prevail.'

Both in the pulpit, and in prayer-meetings, in agonies of faith and prayer, I was frequently thrown into violent fits. These extremities proved the season for God's opportunity, to show to all, that sinners are not awakened and converted by strength of arm, but by the Spirit of God. Sinners have been led to weep, and cry for mercy, and this has become nearly general in every part of the Circuit. At the Christmas quarter, we found an increase of 95 members, and 138 notes given upon trial. In the course of the last quarter the numbers are tolerably well kept up; out of 138 notes given, we gave tickets of admission into the Society unto 120, and also gave notes on trial unto 195,—so that on the whole, we have added above 400 souls since Conference; and, praise the Lord, the blessed work is going on more rapidly than ever! My

plan is—preaching short, and a prayer-meeting after sermon. In some of these seasons we continue to pray, sing, and encourage penitents, for three, four, and sometimes five hours; whilst 'Glory to God' is shouted from boiling-hot full hearts, hundreds of times. And what is more extraordinary, we have met with so little opposition. Even those professors that stood aloof, and perhaps did not know what to make of it, did not curse us at all, nor bless us at all, but waited to see how it would turn;—even upon these, it has turned the right way; and stubborn facts have led them not only to approve, but many of them have stepped forward to the help of the Lord: and, as many hands make light work, we are at present getting on more rapidly than ever.

"Last Sunday we had a lovefeast in Gateshead. It commenced after one o'clock, and the chapel was more than filled. No time was lost; often two or three were speaking together. I attempted to close the meeting about four o'clock with prayer; this increased the flame, and numbers cried aloud for mercy; and the chapel was not cleared till ten o'clock at night. About twenty souls got liberty, but it is impossible to ascertain the exact number. On Monday I preached twice in Durham Circuit, and not less than twelve got converted to God. Last Friday I was in Hexham Circuit, preaching twice for schools; we got both souls and money. But the most extraordinary season I have had in this

country was about five weeks since, at Easington Lane, in the Sunderland Circuit. After the morning sermon, seven were converted at the prayer-meeting, before dinner. In the afternoon, we had three times as many people as the chapel would hold. I preached at the door, and published for a prayer-meeting in the chapel. In a few minutes the chapel was quite full; the blessed work of praying with penitents began, and we were not able to conclude the meeting till nearly three o'clock in the morning. Even then, some began a prayer-meeting in the street. Many were aroused from their beds by sinners crying for mercy, and by this means were led to seek the Lord for themselves. Through the day and night, not less than three-score souls were brought to God. I left them the following morning. Every night that week they held meetings till near midnight, and even through the day. Women in different neighbourhoods meet for prayer. We had some of them at our lovefeast on Sunday, who say that the work is still going on. May the blessed fire of love consume everything contrary to itself here, yonder, and everywhere. Amen!

"My health is much improved. I have not had a fit during the last five months; so that through it all I have had strength to my day. Our financials are flowing. Last Quarter-day we had near thirty pounds we did not know what to do with! My soul is alive: I am going in full sail to glory;

willing to work, and, if suffering should be my lot, hope I should have grace to my day.

"I am, in haste, thine as ever,

"HODGSON CASSON."

"P. S.—I expect Midford Atkinson here next Sunday, and trust he will blow the bellows and increase the flame."

In this determined attack on the citadel of the prince of darkness, Mr. Casson was cheered by the hearty co-operation of his kind Superintendent. Often whilst ministering the word of life he was interrupted by the penitential cries of those who were in distress, so as to be occasionally compelled to desist from preaching, and to come down amongst the people to pray with the mourners. So numerous were the conversions that took place, that he at one time inconsiderately gave expression to the joyous feelings of his heart, by abruptly exclaiming,—"The devil is going to become bankrupt, and will have to be sold up!" This hasty expression, drawn from him at the impulse of the moment, was soon put into circulation, and prompted some of the would-be wits of the place to come out in defence of the interests of their master, by the publication of some doggerel poetical effusions, entitled "The Great Fight at Gateshead, between Cumberland Hodge and Brimstone Harry;" with a caricature on the title-page of the pamphlet,

representing the combatants in pugilistic attitude, with Mr. Mann as the bottle-holder. But this futile exhibition of folly fell harmless at his feet, and neither disturbed the equanimity of his mind nor interrupted him in his course of useful labours. It was abundant satisfaction to himself and his colleague to find at the close of their first year's ministry, a net increase of 260 souls, "gathered from the county of Durham, into the kingdom of God."

In the same peaceful frame of mind he entered upon his second year with his Gateshead friends. In a letter to Mr. Atkinson, August 9th, 1828, he says, "Praise the Lord, I have still to say, 'the best of all is, God is with us.' My soul is happy,—my health is good,—my wife's health but middling,—her soul growing in grace; children all well, and hope they will be witnesses for Jesus in time and eternity. Our good work is still going on. We expect friend Rawson in Gateshead, to preach the chapel anniversary sermons on the 17th of August, and Mr. Lessey on the 19th. We are anticipating a glorious festival: it would increase the feast if we could have you with us. 'Swalwell darlings' are all alive! I am all in a hurry—post haste to glory—have just time to say, I am

"Thy glowing love-hot brother,

"HODGSON CASSON."

From the extracts of correspondence already made,

it will be seen that Mr. Casson's fame in the north led to his services being frequently called into requisition at Sunday-school, Chapel, or Missionary anniversaries. He was easily induced to accede to the warmly-expressed wishes of his friends, but was ever careful to render those visits subservient to the great leading business of his life. He was at no loss for a word in season; the fertility of his mind showed itself, at such times, in the beauty and simplicity of the imagery introduced. Nor was he often without success in diffusing cheerfulness on the countenances of his hearers, and in reaching the best affections of their hearts. As a specimen of his pulpit effusions on these occasions, we will take the concluding sketch of a Missionary sermon, founded on Matthew ix. 37, 38 :—"The harvest truly is plenteous," &c. The plan of the sermon was, I. The harvest plenteous ; II. The Lord of the harvest must send more labourers ; III. We must pray for it, and he will answer. On his third head he urged the duty of prayer,—"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers. Let them be of Thy sending; those Thou hast sent, stand by them, and help them; and fully equip others with grace and gifts to fill the place of those who will not work, or those that have finished their day, or to go to that part of the field where none have yet gone. Let us pray that God would cure the loiterers, the money-loving gentlemen that eat the fat, and clothe

themselves with the finest of the wool; that he would either end them or mend them,—make them work or set them aside. Many are ready to go to any part of the field. Pray that hafts, handles, and shanks, may be put upon their sickles; hooks, scythes, forks, and rakes, may be furnished by them who have hitherto kept money back. You know in the harvest all are employed; some with scythes cutting down,— others with hooks clipping the corners where it is laid,—others gathering and binding the sheaf,—some putting up the stooks,—aged men looking on, giving directions,—the old dame at home, preparing something to eat and drink for the people in the field, setting the little lassie off with bottles and basket,—the rest of the youngsters are gleaning, picking up the stragglers,—others are helping home that which is ready for the barn. You must not expect the Preachers, with scythes and hooks, to do all. We want prayer-leaders and class-leaders to gather and bind; exhorters, Sunday-school teachers, and tract distributors to clip up the furrows and corners; the gleaners to invite stragglers to Jesus; the lassie with basket and bottles represents collectors; such as are forking, raking, and leading home, are the visitors of the sick and dying, with tears of joy shouting 'Harvest home!'"

One of these excursions, was to Bishop Auckland, where the Bishop of Durham has his palace, and

generally resident. It was his first visit to the town and though the friends had heard of his popularity, there were some misgivings amongst the members of the Missionary Committee, lest the collection should fall short of the amount raised the preceding year, when they had been favoured with the services of talented men of another stamp. No doubt was entertained but that crowds of persons would be attracted by the fame of him "whose praise was in the churches;" but a fear was expressed, that they would be from a class who, however willing, might not be equally able to swell the funds.—Mr. Casson being the principal stranger to whom they had to look for sustaining the interest of the day. At length Mr. Boxton, who had urged the invitation, agreed to guarantee, that should the collection fall short of the last, which was £12, he would make up the deficiency. This settled the knotty question. Mr. Casson came; and to the astonishment of the Committee, the collections amounted to £33, of which sum £11 was taken at the close of Mr. Casson's sermon in the evening of the day,—satisfactory proof that his sermons and addresses were effective, not with the poorer classes alone, but that those whom Providence had favoured with more of this world's goods, were unable to resist his forcible appeals.

The following morning, his host proposed that they should take a walk round the Bishop's park and palace. The late Rev. James Shoar, Mrs.

Shoar, and a group of Christian friends, accompanied them. It was a fine summer's morning; the face of creation shone in all its loveliness: the picturesque scenery,—the venerable oaks suspending their branches over the bank of the river Gaunless,—the verdant slopes,—the spreading lawns,—the browsing deer,—all combined to present an assemblage of delightful objects calculated to enchant the soul, and awaken the most pleasing sensations. Mr. Casson relished the treat as much as his friends; and, ascending a little eminence close to the castle-wall, called upon the party to halt, declaring in the joyousness of his spirit, that he had not seen so sweet a place for praising God in, for a long time. He gave out, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," and struck up the Old Hundredth tune, which was sung heartily by not less than twenty voices, in true Methodist style. His host was ready to tremble; he was then but a young tradesman, not long resident in the place, and dreaded the possible consequences to himself. But his fears were still more awakened when he saw Mr. Casson drop down upon his knees, along with the rest of the party, and heard him pour out his fervent supplications for the Bishop, his family, his servants, and all the world besides. To increase Mr. B.'s alarm, on rising from their knees, he beheld the chief-butler in the distance, issuing from the back-door of the palace; and, lest offence should arise, he considered

earnest supplication for the salvation of those around him, whilst the countenances of some, and the sighs of distress arising from the breasts of others, betokened the deep interest that had been awakened. It is said, that he ceased not to pour out his intercessions in behalf of his strange companions until some of them obtained mercy.

That his conduct in this instance was in accordance with his proceedings in other places, is corroborated by the testimony of those who had witnessed them. Once, when passing along the streets of South-Shields, he heard a similar noise of revelry to that above described, and proposed to an accompanying friend, that they should enter the room,—which step, from prudential reasons, was declined. This led him to relate the following incident. Having made an engagement to preach at Shineyrow, or some other village in the Sunderland Circuit, he proceeded to fulfil it. At that time there was a steam-packet running between Sunderland and Fatfield, conveying passengers between the two places; and, desirous of having a sail up the river, the rather as it would take him near the place where he had to preach, he stepped into the boat. As soon as the packet started, an old man began to tune his fiddle, intending to amuse the passengers, and benefit himself as they proceeded to their destination. Mr. Casson's active eye easily penetrated the old man's intentions, and,

sitting down beside him, he inquired if he could play a certain tune which he named: the man replied, "No; I do not know it." Mr. Casson then referred to several others, asking the man if he could play them; to which he still answered in the negative. By and by, the attention of the fiddler and of several of the passengers being arrested, Mr. Casson began to sing to them several of the tunes he had mentioned, and thus continued singing hymn after hymn, until the packet reached its destination; and not a solitary tune could the poor fiddler play during the trip. "Now," said Mr. Casson to his friend, when relating this incident, "there is nothing like acting upon first impressions: if I had not taken my seat beside the fiddler when I did, we should have had fiddling and dancing all the way."

His faithfulness in reproving sin has been already adverted to, and another instance of his ingenious and successful mode of doing it, may be recorded as having taken place when he was in the north. Going one evening to his appointment, he overheard a man uttering some awful imprecations; he boldly went up and accosted him thus:—"Then you are praying, are you? Now, let me make a bargain with you,—never to pray more as long as you live, and I will give you five shillings" (meaning that the man should never *swear* more). The swearer accepted the offer: Mr.

Casson gave him the money, saying in a very solemn tone, "Now, remember it is a bargain; and I will meet you again before the bar of God." Mr. Casson left him to ruminate on this strange adventure. The more the man thought about it, the more deeply he became alarmed, until the conviction fastened upon his mind, that the strange personage who had appeared to him so unexpectedly, was no other than the devil, to whom, for the paltry sum of five shillings, he had now sold himself. Under these alarming apprehensions he hurried home to disburden his distress to his wife, to whom he related all the particulars of the appearance of the tall stranger clothed in black, and this desperate bargain. She listened with amazement, and fully coincided with him in the conviction that he was a lost man. She would have nothing to do with the money, "the price for which he had sold himself, body and soul." In deep distress he found his way to the Methodist chapel, and heard Mr. Casson preach: the arrow of conviction pierced his soul, and he rested not till he was made the happy partaker of the sovereign efficacy of that blood which makes the wounded whole.

Mr. Casson's appointment to Gateshead may, upon the whole, be regarded as the most important one that he fulfilled during the course of his ministry, and as having been accompanied with the greatest amount of success. He found 910 mem-

bers returned as the number at the time of his arrival in the Circuit, and he left 1,380. And yet this forms no certain criterion of the full amount of his usefulness, as one of the principal friends resident there does not hesitate to say that scores, if not hundreds, from Newcastle and other places, were savingly converted to God through his instrumentality. .

CHAPTER VIII.

1830, 1831, 1832.—DURHAM.

"SOME Christians are singular for faith, others for almsdeeds,—some for prayer, others for humility; but love to God commands all these. Love commands patience to bear, and hope to wait, and faith to believe. Love is compared to scarlet, which is a royal cloth, not for the wool, but the dye: so a soul doubly dipt in love to God, is the most excellent Christian."—DR. SAMUEL ANNESLEY.

WHEN Mr. Casson was approaching the close of his engagement at Gateshead, he received a pressing invitation from his old friends at Barnard Castle to travel in that Circuit. They had frequently been favoured with his assistance on special occasions, and were very desirous of securing the enjoyment of his stated ministry amongst them: though the invitation was heartily reciprocated by him, yet all the influence which his friends could exert failed to accomplish their object. In a large connexional body, like that under the direction of the Wesleyan Conference, circumstances will from time to time occur in certain localities, which require careful discrimination in the selection of suitable Ministers to meet the peculiarity of the position. These

remarks will apply to the case of Durham, at the period when Mr. Casson's three years' labours in Gateshead terminated. It was with painful emotions that he was called in the order of Providence to leave a spot where his Divine Master had greatly honoured him, and to which he was closely linked by many endearing ties of friendship and affection, the recollection of which was so deeply engraven on his heart, that neither the stern arm of affliction nor the hand of cankering time could ever efface it.

The cause of Methodism in Durham was struggling for existence against the efforts of some who ranked high in station and influence; but who, because of some petty annoyances, had been led to dissever their long connection with the church of their fathers: in consequence of which, under their patronage and support, the Kilhamite, or New Connexion Preachers, had been invited to form an establishment in the place. A Society was soon raised, consisting principally of members who had seceded from the old body, the number of whom was so considerable, that Mr. Casson, on his arrival, found Methodism, to adopt his own language, in "a state of bankruptcy." However, he addressed himself to his work, knowing his resources, and confidently relying on the promise of Him who hath said, "Lo, I am with you always." He cordially united with his excellent and highly-

esteemed Superintendent, the Rev. Edward Jones, who had already been one year in the Circuit, in devising plans and schemes for ministerial usefulness. Prayer-meetings, which for some months past had been dwindling away, were again revived, and soon began to assume a more healthy aspect. Mr. Casson's fame, as a revivalist, had preceded him; and, in a little time, the avenues leading to the almost deserted house of prayer were seen crowded by numbers of persons, eagerly flocking together to hear the strange man of whose eccentric proceedings they had received so many marvellous reports. But whatever might be the primary motive which led men to the sanctuary, to numbers the Gospel proved the power of God unto salvation; and the earnest inquiry was heard proceeding from the lips of many a sincere penitent, "What must I do to be saved?" It soon became the delightful task of the rejoicing servants of God, to point the anxious inquirer to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Never was Mr. Casson so much in his element as on these hallowed occasions: surrounded by the cries of distress, and the triumphant rejoicings of new-born souls, he could not refrain from giving full play to the joyous emotions of his spirit, mingling his songs with the glad exultations of those who had obtained mercy through the atoning blood.

The deep anxiety of his mind to witness the

revival of the work of God, and the intense fervour of soul with which he entered into it, preyed upon his physical strength, and in all probability led to the recurrence of those epileptic attacks, which, for about three years, had been mercifully suspended. These now returned with their former prostrating influence, and in a greater or less degree affected him during the remainder of his life. His zeal outstripped his prudence: he exerted himself beyond what even his giant strength could bear, heedless alike of the indications of his own sinking frame, and the kind remonstrances of affectionate friends, who, deeply concerned to witness the too visible effects of his labours upon his constitution, earnestly entreated him to spare himself a little, and more economically husband those resources, which, under judicious management, might long have been perpetuated in ministering to the edification of the church. Unhappily, to such entreaties he turned a deaf ear, and would calmly reply, "I intend to have my work done soon, and go to glory; and therefore I serve God with all my strength." In this point, the soundness of his theology was sadly in fault, notwithstanding the unquestionable sincerity and purity of his intention. In his public ministrations, whilst enlarging on the obligations of the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength." he scrupled not, publicly to

assert, that unless he had in the services of the Sabbath preached, prayed, and exhorted until he was so far exhausted that only sufficient strength was left to enable him to undress, and creep into bed, he suspected himself of not having loved God with all his strength. His was truly a self-sacrificing or self-consuming zeal. His heart was set upon the conversion of sinners: he lived—prayed—laboured incessantly for this; and, to accomplish his purpose,

> "He launch'd upon the stormy seas,
> Bankrupt of health, and prodigal of ease."

"No slight bodily indisposition," says his intimate friend, "no atmospherical inclemencies, ever kept him from his preaching appointments; and my firm conviction is, that had he known how to take care of his health, he might have been alive at this day." And the testimony of another friend, often associated with him in hallowed labour, is in unison with the sentiments just recorded. "His was labour which the Lord of the vineyard crowned and blessed, not only in his own appointed sphere, but in many of the neighbouring Circuits. His life was shortened by excess of labour: but the crown of glory is now associated with the cross of the martyr; and the throne of grace he so much delighted to approach by faith and prayer 'without ceasing,' is now seen by him as it is."

Allusion has been made to his eccentricities, as possessing an attractive influence in increasing the number of his hearers. That he *had* eccentricities cannot be denied. Possibly some may be disappointed that they do not form a more prominent feature in this memoir: but though the relation might have been amusing, it is questionable whether a minute detail of them would have been attended with any permanent benefit. Yet as many strange accounts have obtained circulation, which are calculated to detract from the general excellency of his character, it is only fair to state that many of these descriptions have been greatly overcharged. Some of those friends who knew him best, and whose opinions on this point are deserving of respect, have no hesitation in affirming that many of the anecdotes which have obtained currency are pure inventions, whilst others are strangely caricatured and distorted. He grew in the estimation of the discerning, in proportion as he came in close contact with them. The Rev. William Jessop remarks:—"My personal acquaintance with Mr. Casson immensely exalted my opinion of him. He seemed in the distance somewhat fanatical; but half a day's conversation with him, convinced me, that in his case, some courses which appeared most exceptionable, were pursued under the influence of a zeal for souls unusually intense, and a noble disregard for the objections of the captious crowd. His own

responsibilities,—the condition of the wicked,—and the Saviour's love,—rested on his heart with such commanding power, that he seemed deaf to the objections of the fastidious, and the jibes of the profane; being content to be accounted a fool among men, so that he might win some to Christ." The sentiments of his brethren in the ministry, in the short but graphic outline of his character, inserted in their Annual Minutes, are sufficiently full and expressive on this subject: and we copy their testimony the more readily in this place, because it was so strikingly confirmed in the course of his ministry in the Durham Circuit:—"Conscious of the purity of his intentions, and guileless and unsuspecting as to others, he allowed himself occasionally, in his fervid public addresses, to adopt modes of expression not in accordance with good taste, or with the reverence which becometh the house of the Lord. Such peculiarities exposed him to censure, especially on the part of those who did not understand his character, and who had not come within the influence of his warm and genial friendship, and his pure and hallowing piety. But few can doubt that many souls will be the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus." Thus whilst crowds were drawn to the Wesleyan chapel, there were some of the more sober minded of his Durham congregation, who did not derive that edification from his pulpit addresses which was desirable. But it was far other-

wise in the colliery villages: there he was hailed with the liveliest demonstrations of joy; his style of preaching was just adapted to gain their attention, and win upon their affections: and it was an interesting sight to mark the interest with which they listened to those glowing descriptions of Divine truth which he brought before them; the tears ever and anon coursing each other down their black faces, affording decisive evidence that truth had secured a lodgment in their hearts. Some of this class of men are yet recognised as the seals of his ministry, who are now sustaining important and useful offices in the church of God, and to whom the name of the instrument of their conversion "is as ointment poured forth." At the close of his first year's ministry it was a source of satisfaction to find a small increase of members throughout the year, amounting to twenty-six, after supplying the chasm made in the ranks by the number of those who had seceded.

At the Conference of 1831, he was re-appointed to Durham, along with the Rev. John Shipman. His colleague was soon laid aside by a painful and protracted affliction, and was obliged to call in a supply. But Mr. Casson was always ready to assist him to the utmost of his power, whilst his kindness and sympathy, his cheerful and lively disposition, his heavenly conversation and fervent prayers, tended greatly to alleviate the sorrows and

sufferings of his friend. The recollection of the interest he displayed is still cherished in the mind of his esteemed Superintendent, awakening in his soul the liveliest feelings of love and esteem. He cannot forget the genuine piety and untiring zeal of his devoted fellow-labourer, and particularly his attendance at the prayer-meetings, where he was ever found amongst the first in the morning, and the last at night. At the commencement of his second year he received a pressing invitation from Barnard Castle, to attend the celebration of the Sunday-school Jubilee, and to preach on the succeeding Sabbath in aid of the funds of the Wesleyan School in that place. His reply, addressed to Mr. J. Steele, is characterised by that innocent humour and ingenuity which were natural to him, and will be read with interest.

"*Durham, August* 31*st*, 1831.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"YOUR kind pressing letter found its way to my house,—has never been out of my pocket since, but when taken out to read, pray over, and think about. Its contents, by this time, are well engraven on my heart. If I had written from the first impression it made there, I would have positively said 'No:' and often since, when the subject has been turned over, and when the visit to Barnard Castle was proposed and put to the vote, the show of hands against it

was nearly unanimous. Present state of health said '*No;*' the places that I should miss that day, were missed on the 21st of August, by my being in Sunderland, and the thought of their being missed again, cried 'No;' the bustle of renewing tickets, and other Circuit concerns, preparatory to the Quarter-day, cried 'No;' any counsel I have had from friends and brethren has been 'No.' A whisper from one was, 'Perhaps brother Aslin will act Mr. H—— over again, and run home before his work is done;' which suggestion of course, said 'No.' My being so often out of the Circuit of late, and other circumstances, with one voice cried, 'No, no, it cannot be; you must not go.' These things, with an increasing consciousness of my inability to take any part in your grand jubilee, so shook my nervous feelings that I dropped the tear, and groaned, 'No, no.' Yet after all that could be said, 'Ardent desire to serve all' kept the chair in the meeting, proposed the question again and again, and having 'Will be Will' at his right hand, seconding all his motions, in the end gave the casting vote. So that if you cannot be served by some more able (not more willing) brotner, I consent to visit Barnard Castle according to your warm wishes, and try to serve your jubilee as well as I can.

"I am, your Brother in Jesus Christ,

"HODGSON CASSON."

After he had made this arrangement, he found some difficulty in carrying it out, in consequence of the inroads of death in the family of one of the principal friends in the place, where, according to the regular plan, he should have been on that day; and where he was expected to improve the occasion, by a funeral discourse. Finding that he must be firm to his engagement, he poured out the feelings of his soul to the bereaved family, in the following sympathetic strains:—"My earnest prayer to the God of all consolation is, that you, and your affectionate family, may ever be supported under all, and through all, which you are providentially called to pass. One of the greatest trials I have had lately was, that it was not in my power to meet your wishes." He then entreats forgiveness, and promises to do better in time to come. The writer has a pleasing reminiscence of his visit to Barnard Castle. On the Sabbath forenoon, September 18th, he ascended the pulpit, and proceeded to give out the first hymn, which had been specially prepared for the occasion:—

"The flowers of fifty summers gone,
The leaves that then were green,
Have nothing left to look upon,
To tell that they have been."

The fine feelings of his soul were overpowered by the sentiments; his full heart could no longer contain itself; and he was compelled to sit down,

while a friend gave out the remainder of the hymn for him. After this he went on with the regular service, selecting as his text the impressive petition "Thy kingdom come!" A holy, heavenly influence pervaded the whole of the discourse. He alluded, in a very touching manner, to the overwhelming power of the Spirit, which had at the commencement filled his frail earthen vessel to overflowing. In the conclusion, he made his text tell on Sunday-school operations, and seemed to hear the words, "Thy kingdom come!" not only breathing out in the fervent morning devotions of the teachers, but he heard the response reiterated by the music of the "clogs" of the little fellows, clanking along the chapel-yard, as they cheerfully ran to resume their work at school.

Mr. Casson's visits on occasions like the above were received with a high relish, and always awakened great interest. Not only in the services of the sanctuary was he cordially hailed, but at the fireside of his host he was welcomed as a cheerful guest. He was indeed a happy companion. There was nothing of the cynic or the stern ascetic about him in conversation. He delighted to talk of the revival of religion, and the spread of the work of God; but he did not restrain himself from relating any innocent occurrence that he met with, though it might assume something of the comic, and excite a smile.

We may relate in this place the remarkable conversion, effected through his instrumentality, of a poor but wicked man, who had, like others, been induced to come and hear the strange preacher, of whom he had heard so many wonderful accounts. This individual was lame, and earned a precarious living by carrying coals with two donkeys, from the pits to the city. The poor animals suffered many an unmerciful beating at his hands, a huge staff being carried for the purpose, and used amidst volleys of oaths and imprecations. This man, however, obtained mercy, and for some years "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost." Mr. Casson meeting him one day after his conversion, kindly saluted him, and inquired, "What has religion done for you?" The man, looking to the companions of his daily toil, who now met with a different course of treatment, significantly replied, "Ask my donkeys there!" The reply, it is said, afterwards furnished a new and extended idea to the preacher, in illustrating that passage, "Godliness is profitable to all things." This humble individual began to rise in the world: the two donkeys disappeared to make room for a pony and cart; and, had he continued faithful, he would no doubt have realised to a greater extent the blessedness of true religion.

The second year of Mr. Casson's ministry at Durham was crowned with more abundant success;

so that at its close, the number of members is reported to have been 1,249, being an increase of 319.

In 1832 he was re-appointed for a third year, with the Rev. Richard Ellidge as Superintendent, of whom it may be truly said, "he was a man of God, and a good Minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine." That afflictive scourge, the Asiatic cholera, had a few months previously made its appearance in the north of England, and was still lurking about, and occasionally breaking out in the colliery villages. Though but comparatively few cases occurred in the Durham Circuit, yet, to the great grief of his family, and the severe loss of the church, Mr. Ellidge was numbered amongst the victims of that destructive malady. It found him engaged in his Master's work, at Kip-Hill, and its neighbourhood, ready at the demand of Him who sent him, to lay down his work and his life together. He had remarked to a friend before he left Durham, as though he had some presentiment of the near approach of the last enemy, "You and I have nothing to do but to be ready for heaven;" adding, "I have a powerful impression on my mind, and it increases every day, that I shall die soon, and suddenly." He had left his family on Saturday, October 20th, preached three times on the Sabbath, and on the two following evenings, warning the

people in his last sermon, that, in all probability they would never again hear his voice inviting them to accept salvation. On the following morning the seizure took place, and, resisting every effort to restrain its virulence, on the Thursday evening removed him from this world of pain and suffering. He died in great peace. The whole Circuit was moved at the loss of their Pastor; they felt that a "great man in Israel" had fallen. During the two months of his short residence amongst them, he had greatly endeared himself to his colleague, and won the esteem and confidence of his flock. Pleasing anticipations had been entertained of his ability to build up in faith and love those who had recently been gathered into the church of Christ; but, by this sudden stroke all these expectations were dashed to the ground. By no one, excepting the circle of his family, was the blow more deeply and keenly felt than by his beloved colleague, on whom the care and management of the Circuit devolved. But he put his shoulder to the work; and, whilst the minds of the people were softened by this awakening visitation, and the places of Divine worship crowded with serious and attentive hearers, he engaged with all his heart, and with corresponding success, in the one business of his life.

The Rev. James Carr, now (1853) of Halifax, was sent by the President to his assistance. This was the

commencement of his itinerant career. Though, from the extent of the Circuit at the time, the Preachers had little opportunity for personal intercourse, yet he was soon led to form a high opinion of the piety and devotedness of Mr. Casson. "I have no hesitation," he remarks, "in saying that he was a good man, full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost. He was a man of one business, and valued everything in proportion as it tended to the advancement of that business,—*saving souls*. He seemed to me to have a more ready and easy access to God in prayer, than any other man I ever met with. I never spent a quarter of an hour with him without receiving the impression that he lived in the spirit of prayer,—that he was in reality a man of prayer,—that his sole delight was in God, and doing His will; and I always left him with a deepened conviction of the value and importance of prayer, and with an increasing and longing desire for more of the spirit and purity of the Saviour whom he loved and served."

At one time, during his residence in the Durham Circuit, he had an impression on his mind that some affliction had overtaken the family of Mr. and Mrs. S., with whom he was very intimate. Acting upon this impulse, he proceeded to the residence of his friends, and found their daughter dangerously ill. The physician and medical men who had been called in, had pronounced her case

hopeless. Mr. Casson, after a little inquiry, proposed prayer. Mr. Morland, his intimate friend, who accompanied him, and the members of the family, knelt down, and Mr. Casson pleaded with God with extraordinary feeling and power. When they rose, he turned to the mother of the young person, saying, "The girl will mend." From that hour she began to recover. When the medical men repeated their visit, they were astonished to find her alive, but more so at the change which had taken place in the interval; one of them declaring, "It is not in the power of any medicine which I have given, to produce such results;—it is a miracle!" The young woman rapidly recovered her health and strength. She afterwards married, and is now the mother of a family. Her parents to this day acknowledge the efficacy of "the prayer of faith in saving the sick."

The preceding incident is valuable, as exhibiting one striking trait in Mr. Casson's character, which has already been alluded to in the course of this narrative, but which deserves bringing out more prominently into view, namely, his habitual communion with God. This is fully supported by the united testimony of those of his friends who had the best opportunity of knowing him, and is expressed in language more forcible than any which his biographer could adopt. The Rev. John Bolam states:—"Although Mr. Casson was ever anxious

to crowd as much devotion to God, and usefulness to man, as possible, into the brief and uncertain day of human life, yet it may safely be asserted that he was eminently a man of prayer. Prayer was his element,—his delight. Sometimes he would spend whole hours in holy wrestlings with God; and, occasionally, when I have slept with him, I have been awoke during the watches of the night by his pouring out his soul to God. Through his frequent kneeling his knees were literally horned over, and the knees of his small-clothes were frequently patched before they had been long worn."

The Rev. H. Stephenson says, "Mr. Casson may truly be called a man of prayer. He prayed for everybody, for everything, and on all occasions. With him, prayer was always seasonable, in all companies, amongst all classes of people, in all places, shapes, and forms. And he also loved praise to God. When he shouted, 'Glory be to God!' it was not a wild unmeaning rant; the soul of Casson was in the words of his lips. There was spirit and power felt, and frequently acknowledged by persons who did not admire anything in religion which appears like the grotesque."

The Rev. R. Cooke also says, "He appeared to live in the spirit of prayer, breathe in a pure atmosphere, and keep up a constant intercourse with heaven. His conversation was spiritual and

edifying, and his whole conduct indicated the robustness and vigour of his faith, the manliness and maturity of his piety, and the fulness of his spiritual enjoyment. He was always ready for the exercise. And O, the unction, the power, and blessedness which often accompanied his approaches to the throne of grace! He was mighty in prayer,—he had power with God and prevailed,—he seemed to enter within the veil. The heavens were opened, and showers of blessings came down. I shall never forget those seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,—seasons of spiritual power, profit, and joy."

His friend, Mr. Spensely, of Reeth, also remarks, "I never knew a man who seemed to be so much in his element in prayer as he was, nor one who had so much power in prayer; the influence was always strikingly manifest; cold formalism never seemed comfortable in his presence. You will receive this description of him from every Circuit."

And Mr. Atkinson adds, "He lived as if absorbed in the spiritual kingdom, breathing in its holy atmosphere without interruption, weaned from this earth, and dead to the world, with all the features of a child of heaven."

But, to resume the narrative.—It was a circumstance unfavourable to the spiritual prosperity of the Circuit, that a partial "strike" amongst the pitmen took place about this time. Mr Casson

used all his influence to divert the minds of the people to better subjects; but the bitter strife and agitation to which such events give rise, and the removal of families to other parts of the kingdom, cannot but be detrimental to the prosperity of the work of God; and probably to this, principally, may be attributed the decrease in the number of members, as recorded in the Minutes of 1833. That his ministry in this Circuit was, upon the whole, successful, appears from the fact that, notwithstanding the diminution just referred to, and the unpromising commencement of his labours, the net increase for the three years amounted to 189: and the financial department was so prosperous, that, after increasing the salaries of the Ministers, the Stewards were able to purchase a Circuit-horse; and, at the expiration of Mr. Casson's third year, they called out an additional Preacher. A friend, who had the opportunity of observing his manner of life, during his residence in Durham, gives the following pleasing testimony, with which we shall conclude this chapter:—"He always appeared the same dovoted, loving, earnest, happy man. He frequently said to his people, 'Strive for a high place in glory. Some people are so humble and lowly in their views that if they just get into heaven they will be content; but, as for me, I want to be as near John Wesley as I can get.' Several years afterwards the writer met with him

when on a journey; he inquired minutely after all his Durham friends, and more especially how the work of God prospered. At the conclusion of the interview he said, 'Tell all my friends I am on the highway to glory, and they must all meet me there.'"

CHAPTER IX.

1833, 1834, 1835.—NORTH AND SOUTH SHIELDS

"He charms more souls to Christ by his wild notes, than we do by our set music."—BISHOP * * * 's DESCRIPTION OF JOHN ROGERS.

"'Tis this slapdash preaching, say what they will, that does all the good."—DEAN MILNER.

In 1833 Mr. Casson was appointed to North and South Shields his residence being in the latter town. His fame in the north had now become so general, that his appointment to Circuits with large chapels and respectable congregations was sought for, and hailed with delight. Indeed, his pulpit ministrations were far from being of an inferior order; and, as an impression may possibly be entertained by those who had not the opportunity of knowing him, that his popularity arose entirely from his eccentricity, it may be a proper subject of contemplation to behold him *in the pulpit.*

> "There stands the messenger of truth; there stands
> The legate of the skies."

With mildness in the eye, there is yet a play on the countenance, which indicates fixedness of purpose. His object is evidently to *win* souls. There is an

earnestness in his manner, that marks the deep sense he entertains of the supreme importance of that truth of which he is the messenger. The conviction has taken possession of his heart, that he must secure the attention of his hearers; and, by one means or other, he will have it. His ingenious mind readily devises the method of accomplishing this. Already he has arrested that thoughtless minute; some sudden flash of wit has surprised and interested him. With a half-vacant smile on his countenance, his eye is riveted on the preacher,—little suspecting that the arrow is prepared, and is even now on the string, awaiting a suitable moment to lodge itself in his heart. There is nothing studied, artificial, or ornamental in his style: he had a strong dislike to what he termed "dandy preaching." It is after the old John Bunyan fashion; with a preponderance of racy Saxon words,—words fully understood by his hearers,—at once forcible and impressive. Then listen to the weighty matter of his discourses. He has clear views of Wesleyan theology. The cardinal doctrines of redemption through the Cross, justification by faith, the witness of the Spirit, and Christian holiness in all its branches,—are declared in his sermons with no uncertain sound. And then, the faithful, pointed, spirit stirring manner in which he applies the truth to the consciences of his hearers,—urging with all his power, their immediate decision on some important

question affecting their everlasting interests,—impresses the conviction on the mind that he has entered the sacred place to transact some important business, and that he is not willing to retire until he has accomplished it. But above all, there is the unction,—the hallowing power of the Holy Spirit from on high, the melting influence of Divine love, the holy fire drawn down from the heavenly altar,—such as can only be commanded by the man whose frequent approaches there have communicated to him a mysterious power with God! Yet let it not be understood that the above description is applicable to *all* his pulpit ministrations: it must be admitted, that there were seasons when there was an undue predominance of humour and wit, as though he had given up the reins to his constitutional tendency, and suffered himself to be carried away with it. One of his judicious brethren remarks:—"I have heard him preach ably and impressively; yet a fling, a dash of his peculiarity, at the close of his discourse, seemed to be a sudden and unworthy coming down from the lofty and holy region in which he had been soaring."

The biographer is not singular in expressing admiration of his pulpit exercises. The hundreds and thousands who continued, during the whole period of his ministry at Gateshead and Shields, to crowd the chapels there, to an extent which it is stated has not since been realised, must certainly

be regarded as satisfactory evidence, that either in the matter or manner of his discourses, there was something that entitled them to a hearing. But the sentiments of his brethren in the ministry are well-deserving regard. When stationed in the Whitby District, he attended its Annual Meeting, which was held that year in Stockton. His fame had gone forth, and both Preachers and people felt some curiosity to hear the singular man. He was appointed to preach at one o'clock; and notwithstanding the time in all ordinary cases is unseasonable, *his* name was sufficient to attract a numerous congregation. He preached an admirable sermon from Hebrews ii. 10 :—"For it became Him, for whom are all things," &c.; but it was much tinged with his peculiarities. On the re-assembling of the brethren, the Rev. A. Seckerson, the venerable chairman, said that they ought to give a vote of thanks to brother Casson for his very excellent sermon. The Rev. Robert Miller, distinguished for his shrewdness and penetration, rejoined, that "it was a good discourse, with the exception of some seven or eight expressions, which it would have been better to have withheld." "Praise the Lord!" said Mr. Casson, "only seven or eight expressions to find fault with! There were more kept in than came out." But though Mr. Miller refrained from giving the full meed of praise in his presence, he hesitated not to say at the tea-table, in the company of a few select friends,

"That sermon had more sound divinity in it than all the sermons preached at this District-Meeting put together."

The late Rev. Joshua Fearnside, (whose judgment is entitled to the highest respect,) after hearing him preach in the open air, turned round to a friend near him, and said:—"If any person had been disposed to find fault with a sentiment or with an expression, I do not know where they could have found one." One of his brethren, who repeatedly heard him during the time he was in the Shields Circuit, the Rev. Robert Cooke, has favoured the writer with the following communication:—"The ministry of Mr. Casson during this period was peculiarly spiritual and acceptable. It was often free from those eccentricities which characterised it at other times. He preached with power, and with success. Many of his sermons displayed considerable ingenuity, and breathed forth a yearning pity for mankind. His style of address was always earnest, simple, and impressive. He aimed at the great end of preaching,—the turning men 'from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan to God.' For this he lived, and prayed, and laboured. I have sometimes seen him in an agony of prayer, for the salvation of sinners. His illustrations, though occasionally offensive to good taste, were always designed to accomplish the all-absorbing desire of his heart,—the conversion of his hearers.

Hence, when all were smiling around him, at the utterance of some homely expression or amusing illustration, he would appear quite grave and serious. His appeals to sinners were often searching, awakening, and irresistible. It was no uncommon sight to see men and women weep and tremble under his preaching. And with untiring energy and delight he would direct and encourage conscience-stricken and penitent sinners to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' His single aim was usefulness: he brought all his wit, and ingenuity, and labour, to bear on this point. Some of his illustrations were vivid and striking. For example:—he was preaching from Luke xiii. 11—13. Whenever he took up a narrative like this, he usually appended a name to the person. He did so to this woman, who had been bowed down with 'a spirit of infirmity eighteen years.' After alluding to her unsuccessful applications to physicians and doctors for a cure, he said, 'This woman, having been told that Jesus was to preach in the synagogue, went to hear him. When she got there, he was in the pulpit, and the Priest was beside him. No sooner had the Saviour commenced his sermon, than he immediately fixed his eye upon the woman. The Priest would not have noticed her; but Jesus saw her, and said unto her, 'Woman, come forward!' How she got along the aisle, I know not, for she would have to go on all-fours. However, she made

the attempt; and when she reached the spot where Jesus was, he touched her, and said, 'Thou art loosed from thy infirmity!' and immediately she was made straight. Now, you see the benefit of penitent-forms. If this woman had not come forward, she would not have been healed.' And then followed a happy and successful defence of penitent-forms and revival-meetings.

"In his preaching, he was not confined to one particular method. There were frequent variations. Occasionally he would stop in the midst of a sermon, and request the people to unite with him in prayer; when he would pour out the overflowings of a full and happy soul; and, rising from his knees, would commence singing an appropriate verse of a hymn."

At other times, in the application of his discourse, in urging an inquiry, he would sit down in the pulpit for two or three minutes, to allow his hearers time for consideration and decision. A specimen from his manuscript sketches will illustrate this. The text is, Jeremiah viii. 22:—He proposes to show,—

I. That all mankind are sick.

II. In every age there has been balm.

III. Notwithstanding the remedy, health is not recovered.

In urging the question, "Why?" he is very pointed in his application. "Why have so many

of the human family been lost? Why so many in hell?—why so many on their way thither? Why so many in this town more like human brutes, and incarnate devils, than rational beings? But though they may turn the inquiry into contempt, may I not expect a rational answer from *you*, who frequently attend God's house? *You* have the appearance of rationality. *You* appear to be in your right mind—in your business, in your family. You are in the habit of close thinking about different things. Can you tell me why you are not healed? Why your souls are not converted? your sins not pardoned? Why the soul has so many deadly wounds upon it? Why you will not let the Great Physician heal you? I will sit down, and wait your answer." * * * * "I say, Why? do think!" * * * * "No answer! All speechless! If you cannot answer a poor plain man, what will you do at the bar of Christ?" The effect of such appeals we need not depict. In a similar manner he was accustomed to enforce the inquiry, "Will ye also be his disciples?" (John ix. 27.) Urging their immediate decision, and sometimes requesting the people to testify their readiness to reply in the affirmative, by rising upon their feet. No doubt but these erratic deviations from the ordinary method of preaching, have tended to rivet more firmly on the minds of his hearers the recollection of his impassioned appeals at such seasons. The

fact is, he preached to produce effect. The one object with him was, the sharpness of the sword, not the embellishment of the hilt. The harmony of his sentences, or the refined elegance of the expression, was not his especial study; he lost sight of minor considerations, in his zeal to save men. The following incident is characteristic. A young man in the Circuit, at whose father's house he was regularly entertained, was called out by the President of the Conference into the itinerant work. Accompanied by another Minister, Mr. Casson spent the afternoon with the family, the occasion presenting a seasonable opportunity for conversation on the responsibilities of the sacred office. Before taking leave, prayer, as was usual on such occasions, was proposed. And whilst their united petitions to the throne of grace were specially presented in behalf of their young friend, the Minister made use of a well-known phrase,—"Make him a polished shaft in thy quiver." However appropriate the prayer really was, it struck Mr. Casson at the moment, as savouring too much of refinement; and he instantly exclaimed, "A besom-shank!—anything to be useful!" The exclamation, though uncouth, was the utterance of a heart jealous for the Divine glory, and desirous of hiding pride from man; and it expressed the feeling which pervaded his whole life—that he should be anything in God's hands, so that he might be the instrument of saving souls

Soon after his entrance upon his new Circuit, he writes to his friend, Mr. John Steele, of Barnard Castle, as follows:—

"*South-Shields, October 4th,* 1833.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"YOURS of the 25th of last month arrived when I was from home: since it fell into my hands, it has been a subject of thinking, talking, and prayer. Your account of the revival at Manchester I read over at our lovefeast at South-Shields, last Sunday; and it produced a most blessed effect. We had some saved,—but only in the *retail* way. However, expectation is raised, and prayer—all prayer—is daily made for the *wholesale* work. * * Of late, my health has scarcely been middling,—perhaps owing to some heavy lifts that had to be taken on ground where there seemed to be little movement. A fortnight last Sunday I was in Newcastle, and was witness to twenty-six souls converted to God; and often, in our own Circuit, have seen twos and threes, and hope soon it will be more general. We have plenty of ground to work on; it only wants cultivation.

"I am, in haste, your affectionate Brother

"In Jesus, everlastingly,

"HODGSON CASSON."

These indications of spiritual prosperity were

hailed by Mr. Casson with adoring gratitude; and, at the close of his year's labours, he rejoiced in an accession to the church of seventy souls. He was thankful to report progress, if only in the "retail" way; although he was anxious to lanch out into the "wholesale" work, so that souls might be brought to God by scores and hundreds, as his friend had informed him was the case in Manchester.

The commencement of the second year of Mr Casson's ministry in the Shields Circuit was marked by a painful dispensation of Divine Providence, similar to that which has been recorded in the preceding chapter. On the 16th of September, his excellent Superintendent, the Rev. Robert Nicholson, was suddenly removed from the field of labour to his eternal reward. He fell a victim to the same disease, the malignant cholera, which had deprived Mr. Casson of his former colleague, and the attack appears to have been equally as unexpected and decisive. On Saturday, the 13th, the first premonitory symptoms of the disorder appeared, and continued to increase during the day following. His sufferings gradually subsided, until about four o'clock on Tuesday morning, when he calmly entered into rest. At the commencement of the attack, he observed to his medical attendant, "I thank God, I have not to inquire, 'What must I do to be saved?' I have not religion to seek." And in reply to some

questions proposed to him the evening before he died, he said, "I have no doubt of obtaining the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." After the funeral, his brethren the Preachers endeavoured to improve this instructive and solemn event, by delivering suitable addresses in Howard-Street Chapel, North-Shields, to a deeply attentive congregation. To Mr. Casson, this dispensation would be peculiarly impressive; recalling to his recollection a similar occurrence, and reminding him forcibly of the immortal lines of the sainted Richard Baxter,—

> "I preach as never sure to preach again,
> And as a dying man to dying men."

Upon the death of Mr. Nicholson, the Superintendency devolved on the Rev. Alexander Strachan. His other colleague was the Rev. Alexander Hume. Mr. Strachan was of the same Connexional standing as Mr. Casson; but, from his residence being in North-Shields, and from his longer experience in the administrative department of the work, he was certainly the best adapted to take the management of such an important Circuit. In fact, Mr. Casson rarely interfered with disciplinary matters; the Superintendency of a Circuit was never with him a matter of choice. When, in the order of Providence, it devolved upon him, he did the best he could. Preaching, and prayer-meetings, constituted his proper sphere; and of this he appeared so con-

scious, that he seldom took part in other operations.

One of the most important questions that is awakening the attention of the faithful Minister in the present day is this, How is the out-door population of our country to be reached? The erection of churches and chapels,—the increase of the number of those who are employed in the ministry,—its improved character,—the multiplication of Sabbath and day schools,—the extensive scattering abroad of religious tracts,—as well as various other agencies, have been brought into active operation; yet, after all, the sad state of demoralization,—the general neglect of attendance on Divine ordinances,—the prevalence of Sabbath-breaking,—and the comparative apathy of Christian congregations, (if we may not say their awful lethargy,)—present a fearful picture, calculated to appal the heart of the devoted servant of Christ, and excite the most gloomy forebodings. It is the opinion of those who best knew Mr. Casson, that his ministry was peculiarly adapted to this object, and it is a subject worthy the serious consideration of the Christian Minister, how far his projects are deserving of being copied. His open-air preaching,—his unwearied watchfulness in laying hold of every casual occurrence to awaken thoughtful consideration,—his pastoral visitations,—his faithful and serious reproof of the open violators of God's law,—his never-ceasing inter-

cessions at the throne of Divine grace,—his devotedness to God,—and other distinguishing traits in his character developed in the progress of this memoir,—all combined to draw down the peculiar unction of the Spirit upon the word, and rendered him a most successful preacher of the Cross of Christ. Dr. Adam Clarke* has observed that, "from an indescribable law in the economy of the intellectual world, the spirit that acts upon another begets in it its own likeness." The force of this remark was strikingly exhibited in the subject of this memoir. He had a peculiar tact for attracting the hearts of the people; he convinced them that he was in earnest, that he sought their best interests, ardently loved their souls, and was bent on promoting their salvation, whilst his fervent zeal,—his readiness of expression,—his scintillations of wit,—his fine musical voice,—all lent their aid to melt down his captivated hearers, and draw them to the Cross. One of the most steady lovers of Methodism in North-Shields, states that, "from his first entrance upon his duties in our Circuit, the chapel was crowded, and continued so the whole three years he was stationed here,—poor persons especially flocking to hear him. The finances were in a healthy state, and we had considerable additions to the Societies throughout the Circuit." In every place, he had the happiness to see souls

* See Works, Vol. xii.—"Letter to a Preacher," p. 148.

savingly brought to God; and, though a more obstinate resistance distinguished some places, particularly Cramlington Colliery, yet here also, in connection with his faithful and earnest expostulations, the awakening power of God came down. This gracious visitation commenced on a Christmas-eve, when he was accompanied to the place by one of his old friends, a Local-Preacher from the Penrith Circuit. During the prayer-meeting, after his friend had preached, he addressed one of his telling exhortations to the people, and seven or eight souls that day found peace with God.

The Rev. Robert Cooke has supplied some interesting incidents connected with this period, which we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity of transcribing:—

"Mr. Casson was instant in season and out of season, always watching for an opportunity to do good. He was ready to 'sow beside all waters.' One afternoon, when he was walking down the railway to Howden, where he had to preach in the evening, he came up to three or four men, who were endeavouring to lift an empty coal-waggon on the line. When Mr. Casson approached them, the men were shouting, 'Now, all together!' at the same time putting all their force to lift the waggon, but they could not effect it. 'You want this waggon put upon the line?' asked Mr. Casson. 'Yes,' was the reply. 'Very well,' said he, 'then let us

all lift together.' He laid down his umbrella, and, taking hold of one end of the waggon, and the men the other, he shouted, 'Now, all together,' and it was instantly upon the line. Turning to the men, he said, 'Now you see the benefit of unity. If we had not lifted all together, the waggon would have been off the line yet; but you see by our united exertions, it is put right. Now, you must all go together to hear Casson preach to-night; you must all meet in class together; and you must all go to heaven together.' As a companion, Mr. Casson was always cheerful and interesting. He was fond of singing, and could catch a tune and adapt it to a hymn with remarkable quickness. Immediately after dinner or tea, he would invite the friends to unite with him in singing the praises of God, when he would commence with one of his favourite hymns, to which he had affixed some lively, cheerful tune, such as—

'How happy are we, who in Jesus agree,
To expect his return from above;
We sit under his vine, and delightfully join
In the praise of his excellent love:'

the little party all following him in his rapid melodious strains. Then he would offer up prayer, followed by one or two more, until all seemed to imbibe the fervent and happy spirit of the man of God. On some occasions the room seemed to be filled with God.

"Some of his sayings are remembered from their quaintness. One time when he was requested to conduct the devotional exercises at the commencement of the Missionary meeting at Gateshead, at the conclusion of a prayer full of power and unction, he closed it with this petition, 'The Lord grant that every heart may be filled, and every pocket emptied, for Christ's sake. Amen.'

"Mr. Casson was a man of very fine feeling. He had a deep sympathy with suffering humanity. When visiting the sick he felt acutely for those who were suffering, so that I have known him hesitate to go and see such persons, lest his feelings should overcome him. His remarks, on these occasions, were generally to the point, and displayed considerable discrimination. Entering the cottage of a good woman, one day, he kindly inquired how she was. 'O, Sir,' she replied, 'I have a bad headache.' 'That,' said he, 'we will leave to the doctor. If you have got the heart-ache, I have a cure for it,—the love of God.' Upon the whole, there was much in Mr. Casson's spirit and conduct to admire and imitate. I have seen him in the pulpit, I have laboured with him in the prayer-meeting, I have observed him in private life, and I have no hesitation in asserting that he was a lively, devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'One thing I do,' was his motto. The conversion of sinners was his single purpose, and the burthen of his prayers. All

his movements were directed to this end, the 'turning of men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' His 'record is on high.' It is believed that hundreds of souls, brought to a knowledge of the truth through his instrumentality, will be 'the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord.' He was 'a burning and a shining light, and many rejoiced in that light.' He 'walked with God.' Piety was the great business of life; it pervaded all his movements. There was piety in his look, piety in his conversation, and piety fully exhibited in his life."

After spending three years in this locality also, marked by unwearied diligence, and ardent exertion in prosecuting the work to which his life was devoted, he bade an affectionate farewell to his friends in the north, and removed to a somewhat more southerly climate.

CHAPTER X.

1536, 1837, 1838.—BIRSTAL.

" FAITH,—perseverance,—zeal,
Language of light and power;
Love prompt to act, and quick to feel,
Mark'd thee till life's last hour."

MONTGOMERY.

MR. CASSON having received an invitation to labour in Birstal, at the Conference of 1836, was appointed to that Circuit. Already had his naturally robust constitution begun to give way beneath the pressure of multiplied labours, and several indications of the approach of physical and mental decay became manifest. The injury which he had received in his head by the maltreatment referred to in the earlier part of this memoir, inflicted a permanent injury on his constitution. One of his brethren, in conversing with him on this point, understood him to say that from that night's treatment resulted the affliction which so painfully affected him during the subsequent period of his life. And, in addition to what has been recorded in a former chapter, it may be stated, in illustra-

tion of that meekness and forgiveness of injuries which formed a prominent trait in his character, that when his friend, before alluded to, inquired if he knew the parties who had thus endangered his life, he replied, he knew them perfectly well. "And did you not take steps to punish them?" "No," said he, "for it would not have healed my head." He committed his cause to Him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine: I will recompense it;" hoping that those deluded sinners might yet be brought to repentance; or, if not, leaving them to the equity of the Great Judge in *that* day.

His new station offered some alleviations to counterbalance the declining state of his health. Birstal was an old Wesleyan Station, the birth-place of the heroic John Nelson, (of whom Southey declares that he had as brave a heart as ever beat in any Englishman,) and the scene of the labours of many a veteran of the olden time. It is situated about seven miles south-west of Leeds, commanding a prospect of a pleasant open country, with a population of about 3,000 souls in the Circuit-town. The Circuit was but a contracted one, when contrasted with those in which Mr. Casson had generally travelled; the distance to the different places was comparatively trifling; and the chapels, though not to be called small, were far from being so large as those to which he had been lately accustomed. A healthy tone of piety pervaded the Societies, so

that every outward circumstance seemed to augur favourably as to its being the very spot where he might not only be useful, but have his physical strength recruited. His colleagues, the Rev. Messrs. H. Beech and Bolam, were men to whom he became greatly attached: they laboured together with one heart and soul, and were soon favoured with many cheering indications of the approving smile of the Great Head of the church.

We insert, with pleasure, the following communication from his esteemed Superintendent, the Rev. H. Beech; not because it develops many new points in his character, but as supplying a satisfactory confirmation of the account already given of those distinguished excellencies with which he was adorned:—

Mr. Beech says, "I have a lively recollection of my fears and feelings respecting him, when he was appointed to be my colleague in the Birstal Circuit. I had heard so much of his eccentricities that I was afraid I might not find him to be one whose speech was seasoned with grace, so as to minister instruction and seriousness to those with whom he might converse. But all my fears in the course of a few interviews were removed; and the simple, yet devout manner, in which he began to work for God, and for souls, placed before me a deportment (in many things) well worthy of imitation. His spirit was deeply imbued with the mind of his

Master, Christ; deadness to the things of the world was constantly manifested, and there was a heavenliness in his conversation which assured us that his life was hid with Christ in God. He quickly detected, and kindly discountenanced anything which reflected upon the character of absent persons: whatever was low or mean his noble soul despised; you could not but feel that you were safe in his hands. I have seen his rebukes act upon the censorious with great power, and fill them with shame. Mr. Casson was a Minister whose undeviating object was to bring souls to God, and to keep them there. In his sermons there were frequently to be seen strokes of wit and keenness of invention, which fixed the attention of his hearers; but, he would come down upon the careless sinner with such terrifying thunders, that he made him feel as though he stood near the awful mount, trembling, whilst the lightning flashed upon his guilty conscience, and hell seemed to be opening her mouth beneath his feet, to meet him at his coming. At such times there was a majesty and simplicity in his language, united with great earnestness and compassionate yearnings in his soul. This, being accompanied with the powerful influence of the Spirit, has often melted down a whole assembly, whilst many with broken hearts were crying, 'What must we do to be saved?' And then, how he would take his stand by the

cross on Calvary, and unfold the willingness and ability of the Saviour *there*, and *then;* preaching a *free*, a *full*, and a *present* salvation, in a manner so striking as showed him to be a very successful Minister. His painful and peculiar affliction often prevented him doing what he would gladly have accomplished. My greatest concern about him was, that he was 'in labours more abundant' than he ought to have been; and the sympathy I felt towards him, made it quite pleasant to take his place when we could persuade him to relax his exertions."

The testimony of the Rev. John Bolam, who was his near neighbour, is equally pleasing. He says,

"In Mr. Casson's frequent visits to my house, he seldom left without prayer, frequently requesting my wife and myself to join him, adding, 'Bless God, we cannot be better employed.' And, upon rising from his knees, he would sometimes say, with a countenance expressive of the heaven which dwelt within his breast, 'Now, let us get on. Let us try to glorify Him. Let us keep in perpetual motion heavenwards. O, the weight of glory that awaits us on the other side!' For uniform continuous devotedness to God, I have never known his equal. In the pulpit, in his family, and in the social circle, he was always the same humble, sincere, and devoted man of God, evidently doing all

for eternity, and with a single eye to the glory of God. * * * During the many years I have known him, I have found him in various circumstances, but I never in one instance found him deviating from his steady onward course. Occurrences that might have caused some oscillation, even in men of high-toned piety, never disturbed the equilibrium of my dear friend. Sometimes I have been with him when he has had a severe epileptic fit; and as soon as the attack subsided, his first expression would be, 'Praise the Lord! Bless his holy name. We can never sufficiently praise him.' His conversation was truly in heaven, and 'his treasure and his heart were there;' and it is my firm conviction that, for many years, he lived in a constant state of preparation for a better world.

"His moral heroism was a striking feature in his Christian and ministerial character. 'In season and out of season,'—in fairs, or amidst merry-makings, he would frequently take his stand, and deliver his Lord's message; and seldom did he allow an opportunity of warning the ungodly to pass unimproved. His conviction of the alarming state of the unsaved was so vivid and penetrating, that in addition to the hours he was accustomed to spend in his closet in holy wrestlings for their salvation, his heart was always devising means for being made instrumental in the salvation of souls. When we lived neighbours at Birstal, he called upon me the evening

before our District-Meeting, which was to be held at Wakefield, to inquire if I would join him in walking thither on the following day, to save the Circuit the usual charge for travelling expenses. On my agreeing to his proposal, he immediately kneeled down, and implored, with great earnestness the blessing of God upon us both, and especially upon our journey; entreating of the Lord not to allow us to travel so many miles without His throwing some work in our way. The next morning we started early, carrying a little refreshment with us, of which we intended to partake by the way. After we had walked some distance, I proposed that we should halt, and partake of our provision; but again and again he replied very promptly, '*Not yet!*' At length he pointed to a small inn, and said, 'That is the place!' No sooner had we sat down to take our scanty meal, than the good man of the house inquired if we had heard what had just happened in the place. On our replying in the negative, he told us that a woman had hanged herself. At once Mr. Casson took up his hat, and told me to follow him. Upon our arrival at the house of the poor woman, which was crowded with people, we both in our turns spoke as closely as we could, on the subject of death, and the necessity of being always prepared; we then knelt down, and continued in prayer for some time; but such a season I shall not soon

forget. On leaving the place we could not but indulge the hope, that some fruit would be found at the Great Day."

After having had a trial of his new Circuit, he pours out the feelings of his soul to his esteemed friend, Mr. John Kimpster, of Gateshead, in the following cheering strains:—

"*Birstal, June 19th*, 1837.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"YOU will rejoice to hear we have some prosperity in the Circuit: all is great peace and harmony. Both my colleagues, Beech and Bolam, have as much grace and patience as to bear with my infirmities: we are in reality a threefold cord. The people in general in this old Circuit are of the old-fashioned kind. I have not been amongst a people, since I left Gateshead, that so much resembled my dear friends in your Circuit. Praying with all prayer is their daily exercise. We know nothing of bickerings or disputations in our Leaders'-meetings: our prayer-meetings and band-meetings are real Bethels; we scarcely pass a week without witnessing some penitents, and new-born souls. This last fortnight I have seen not less than fourteen souls brought into liberty. "HODGSON CASSON."

What a delightful picture of a simple, united church! What a significant emblem of the happiness of heaven!

"How pleasing to our King,
This fruit of righteousness;
When brethren all in one agree,
Who knows the joys of unity!"

What sincere lover of Zion does not lament that such hallowed associations as these should be at any time disturbed by the inroads of devastating strife!

At the close of his first year's station at Birstal, his colleagues and he had the happiness of finding 1,635 souls under their care, being an increase of 61 upon the preceding year. The Conference of 1837 being held in Leeds, he attended its sittings, and preached: many of his brethren, attracted by his fame as a revivalist, embraced the opportunity of hearing for themselves a man, concerning whom so many strange things had come to their ears. There was one circumstance reported in the proceedings of Conference, which was chilling to his soul,—a decrease at home of 439 members: to him, whose uniform motto was "onwards," this was anything but cheering. He refers to it in a letter to Mr. J. Steele, of Barnard Castle, written after he had returned to his Circuit.

"*Birstal, August* 16*th*, 1837.

"My dear Brother,

"Though parted in body, we can never be parted in spirit. No; we are one in spirit, and ever will be, so long as we centre in our living Head, the Lord Jesus. In Him is our relationship;

The preceding letter presents us with another phase in the writer's character: he was a *Wesleyan Methodist*, not only as regards his doctrinal views, but with respect to the discipline of the body. His catholicity of spirit led him to love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; but he loved his own church with a "love that many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown." He was sincerely attached to his brethren in the ministry, and to the members of his flock; and in all the warmth of holy feeling could cherish the sentiment, "I dwell amongst my own people." There he found he had full scope to do and to get all the good he could, and he

"Never changed, nor wish'd to change his place."

He admired the men of the old school, and was a model of their primitive simplicity and sincerity. He never cared to trouble himself with the minutiæ of church polity. He had carefully studied the character of the founder of Methodism, and admired his great design to "spread Christian holiness throughout the land." His New Testament instructed him to "do all things without murmurings and disputings;" so that he had just one specific antidote to heal every kind of contention in the church,—"Let us pray about it." His Methodism led him to do all he could for the evangelization of the world, and whatever might interfere with this cardinal point, he earnestly deprecated.

Prior to the termination of his second year in the Birstal Circuit, he received an intimation from his Gateshead friends, expressive of a strong desire for the renewal of his labours amongst them, after the ensuing Conference. Such a communication was exceedingly honourable; for whilst, on the one hand, it was a high testimony to the zeal, piety, and ministerial qualifications of an old, tried, and faithful servant of God, who for three successive years had served them diligently, and who had then been only eight years removed from them; (the earliest period, according to Methodistic usage, in which those services could be renewed;) yet it was at the same time exceedingly kind on the part of his friends, who, though perfectly aware of his increasing infirmities, were willing to accept such an amount of labour from him as it was in his power to give. But at the March Quarterly Meeting of the Birstal Circuit a majority of the friends concurring in a motion, that he should be invited to remain amongst them for a third year, he left himself, as he generally did, in the hands of Conference, and the result was his re-appointment to Birstal. He renewed his labours with all the vigour and strength of which his debilitated frame was capable; but his peculiar affliction seemed to increase in virulence. The late esteemed Isaac Crowther, Esq., of Morley, entered deeply into his case, and with that noble spirit of Christian gene-

rosity for which he was so much distinguished, exerted himself to procure the best medical skill which could be obtained, regardless of the cost, if it might only be conducive to making the good man more comfortable in his beloved work. But every effort appeared fruitless, and submission to the Divine will seemed to be the only alternative.

At the Conference of 1839, his case engaged the serious consideration of his brethren, and it was their decided conviction that, for prudential reasons of a physical nature, he ought to retire from the regular work of the ministry. He himself had no wish to relinquish an employment which was the delight of his heart; though the outward man was enfeebled, the inner man was yet vigorous, zealous, and energetic; yet in the spirit of Christian submission he bowed to the decision, and was put down as Supernumerary at Birstal. This was the severest trial of his ministerial life. For twenty and four of the best "of the days of the years of his pilgrimage," he had been a faithful, courageous soldier of the cross;—he had never murmured at being appointed to Stations involving the largest amount of hardship and toil;—neither wind nor weather had prevented him from cheerfully marching forth to his appointed work;—day after day he had stood out unwearied at the post of duty, until the midnight hour;—he had never flinched from danger, but was always ready to head the forlorn hope, and to be one of

the first to enter the breach, and storm the enemy's citadel: but, to fall out of the ranks,—to be put on the Superannuated list; or, as himself significantly expressed it, "to be cast into the lumber-room,"—was an exceedingly painful trial, and called into exercise the Christian graces of submission and resignation to the will of Heaven.

That this severe ordeal had a sanctified use, and that his faith was "found unto praise, and honour, and glory," will be perceived from the following touching letter addressed to his confidential friend, Mr. Kimpster, of Gateshead:—

"*Birstal, August* 21*st*, 1839.

"DEAR BROTHER JOSEPH,

"FROM what I know of Gateshead and Newcastle, I am persuaded when Conference news reached them, every one would be surprised to see me put down as Supernumerary. However much so, I am persuaded that it would not be more so with you than with us. How it has been brought about we do not fully know; but we are endeavouring to rest in passive obedience, and to believe that it is amongst the 'all things' that our God will cause to work together for our good. O yes! the wheel within the wheel will ever turn the right way round, so long as faith, working by love, raising the steam, is kept in lively exercise. Yes, praise the Lord, his grace is already bending the mind to say, 'Not my

will, but thine be done!' As soon as it was fully decided that I was Supernumerary, our kind friends here made generous offers for our remaining with them. We have concluded to do so, and perhaps the rest here may so far revive my health, that I may be enabled on some future day, to take the labour of a Circuit more to God's glory than ever. Amen. At present may we stand still, and see the glory of God. Our friends here are presenting us with tokens of their regard, which will enable us to furnish a house amongst them, and I have no doubt we shall be comfortable.

"Believe me yours most affectionately,

"H. CASSON."

But the pressing solicitations of attached friends, united to the unwearied activity of his own mind, would not allow him long to enjoy the rest which he had contemplated. Invitations to preach sermons on special occasions came pouring in from various quarters, so that his new sphere was for some time a scene of more extended labour than that from which he had retired: he felt as though he could not resist the importunity of friends, nor suffer his weapon to rust in its scabbard;

"His sword was in his hand,
Still warm with recent fight;
Ready each moment, at command,
Through rock and steel to smite."

A copy of his reply to an invitation from his old colleague and faithful friend, the Rev. John Bolam, is before me:—

"*Birstal, Sept.* 14*th*, 1839.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"I AM sorry to learn from your note of this morning, that your's is a house of affliction; and earnestly pray that our God may so overrule it for good, that every twig of his rod may be sanctified. * * * All being well, I intend to be with you, at Bramley, on Saturday evening. As you wish to give me a full day's work on Sunday, I shall do what I can to serve you and our blessed Master. Your expectation from a Supernumerary, seems rather extravagant; yet, you will have to be satisfied, if I strive to serve you, as Gabriel serves our God. *He* does as well as he can,—so will I; and if I don't succeed as well as I could wish, you must accept the will for the deed.

"Believe me to be yours most affectionately,

"HODGSON CASSON."

In the latter end of July, 1840, Mr. Casson proceeded to the Newcastle Conference, anxious to present his case to the consideration of his brethren, and earnestly to plead for active employment in the regular work,—the Gateshead friends at the same time petitioning for his re-appointment to that

Circuit. But, whilst the Conference admired his ardent zeal, they could not consent to send him to the grave before his time, and therefore confirmed the decision of the previous year. As for himself, he seems to have had a holy ambition to die a martyr in his Master's work; he was ready to lay himself on the altar of God, impressed with the conviction that a cause so sacred, demanded the exertion of all his powers.

He retired again to his snug retreat at Birstal, not without some feeling of disappointed expectation, and probably ready to conclude,—"I shall die in my nest." But very soon we find him on the wing as before, flying abroad in all directions, to finish the work of Him who had sent him. His renewed entrance on active employment is depicted in the following extract of a letter to Mr. Atkinson, of Carlisle.

"*Birstal, March* 10*th*, 1841.

"My dear Brother,

"May every blessing of the new and everlasting covenant be with you, yours, and all the true Israel of God. Amen. * * * I have no doubt you will believe me, when I tell you that I am gaining some experimental knowledge of the duties of a Supernumerary, which for the last nineteen months I have been trying to learn, and that I am now a little more expert in them. I have

some employment every week, either at home or abroad, and am often gratified in witnessing souls set at liberty and sanctified. To God be all the praise! I have been in many Circuits since Christmas, and although the snow was deep, our Lord enabled me to wade through. I have been at Tadcaster, Manchester 2d, Glossop, and Wakefield; and last week visited Manchester Circuit again,—spent some days with them,—left them yesterday at one o'clock,—and landed home, happy and tired, to tea. One of my best times of late, was on my former visit to the Manchester Circuit, at Pendleton. I witnessed not less than twenty souls saved, also many made perfect in love who are still rejoicing in it. In the same neighbourhood, this last week, we had some saved. I hope God will cause every spark, and the smoking flax, to burst into a blaze.

"Believe me, your real friend,

"H. CASSON."

In a similar strain he writes to Mr. Kimpster, of Gateshead, in one of his last epistolary communications to him:—

"*Birstal, April 26th*, 1843.

"DEAR BROTHER,

"YOU will be enlivened to hear that since I last wrote I have been much exercised in the delightful work of saving souls. Not only in Birstal, but in

Leeds, Dewsbury, Halifax, Cleckheaton, and Wakefield Circuits, I have witnessed some scores of souls converted to God; and not only so, but Preachers and Leaders bursting into agony for, and launching out into, perfect love, — swallowed up in God, in every exercise; so that wheresoever the work deepens, it widens, and ever will. In Bradford Circuit also, many hundreds have been snatched from the way to hell, and brought into the royal way to glory.

"Yours affectionately,

"H. CASSON."

These were scenes into which the writer of this letter entered with the highest delight, and no subject was so melodious in his ears as that of the prosperity of Zion.

The discerning reader will readily perceive from the extracts of correspondence scattered here and there throughout this memoir, that Mr. Casson possessed some of the kindliest feelings of human nature. Those who saw only the rough exterior, little suspected that a soul so kind and affectionate lodged within; a soul formed for friendship,— tender, generous, and sympathetic,—always ready to bear a share in the sorrows of suffering humanity. If any further evidence were necessary, the following letter of condolence to the Rev. John Bolam, at the time when he was bereaved of his beloved

wife, will abundantly confirm these remarks. Having been once in the same school of discipline, he was now prepared to comfort his afflicted brother, "by the comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God."

"*Birstal, June 18th*, 1844.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"THE God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has positively declared that all things shall work together for good to those that love him. Even the most mysterious dispensation will be eventually explained, and then we shall be constrained to exclaim, 'Our God hath done all things well!' When my dear partner and I first heard of the death of your blessed wife, and my dear friend, it had a most solemn and stunning effect upon us. We felt as though we had lost a relative. And, after a solemn silence, we were led to say, 'Poor Bolam!—his true helpmate has gone! What will he do?' But immediately we added, 'His loss is her infinite gain.' Yes, the battle's over! She has landed where she will never shed tears, but where tears will be for ever wiped away. But her gain is surely your loss. You will have to act the part of father and mother to your rising family. We pray and hope that you will ever have grace according to your day. When your burthen becomes unusually heavy, so as to be almost in-

supportable, endeavour to cast both yourself and your burthen on Him, who has engaged to carry both you and it. In the lowest state to which you can be brought, you need never be lower than 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,' in the hope of seeing those whose victory is won, and who are 'for ever with the Lord,' and for ever with those 'who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;' and whose hearts are in tune to join the chorus, 'Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us in his blood, to him be glory everlasting. Amen!' I have no doubt you will be glad to hear we are in tolerable health. Generally I am kept in full employment; and although I begin to feel the infirmities of an old man, yet when I am called to officiate in public, God gives me strength according to my day. My helpmate joins in kindest regards, and wishes you to write soon, and tell us something that will do us good.

"I am, yours affectionately,

"HODGSON CASSON."

Mr. Casson ever lived in the spirit of cordial attachment to his colleagues. He was eminently of one heart and soul with his brethren. In his letters to his intimate friends, to whom he could freely unbosom his feelings, there never breathes an unkind or unbrotherly insinuation against any

of his fellow-labourers. One of these, who had enjoyed frequent intercourse with him for three years, remarks, "I never knew him to level an envenomed shaft at any one, or utter an unkind word unto or concerning any individual." And that this esteem was reciprocated, the writer has had abundant opportunity of observing, whilst corresponding with many of his surviving colleagues. It required but a very short personal acquaintance with him to remove any unfavourable opinion that might have been previously formed. The sentiments expressed by the Rev. F. Barker are in unison with the rest. "I have oft felt great pleasure in reverting to the year I travelled with him in the Shields Circuit, from 1835 to 1836. Though I lived in North and Mr. Casson in South Shields, yet our interviews were frequent enough to impress me in his favour, as much so as several of the brethren whose names and correspondence are given. I esteem it no ordinary privilege to have been associated with so devoted a fellow-labourer."

CHAPTER XI.

1846.—HIS LATTER DAYS, AND DEATH.

"Go to the grave,—at noon from labour cease;
Rest on thy sheaves, thy harvest-task is done;
Come from the heart of battle, and in peace,
Soldier, go home,—with thee the fight is won."

MONTGOMERY.

During the six former years of Mr. Casson's residence at Birstal, as Supernumerary, he was fully employed, as far as health and strength permitted, in preaching at home, or in neighbouring Circuits, and occasionally visiting his old friends in the north, amongst whom he was always received with a cordial welcome. In every part of his own Circuit, such was the high estimation in which his moral and religious character was held, that the people were exceedingly desirous to be favoured with his occasional visits. They were accustomed to remind the Superintendent, to send them Mr. Casson at any time, when he was at a loss for a supply: and he was equally ready to go,—

"Glad to pray and labour on,
Till his earthly course was run."

No querulous complaints, or vain excuses, met the application for his assistance: he was always ready to do the best he could, cheerfully, "with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to man." He was, however, but the wreck of his former self; and his friends could not but remark that there was a perceptible difference in the character of his pulpit ministrations. Those bright flashes of wit, and that liveliness of imagination which had formerly distinguished his public addresses, were not so conspicuous. His discourses were characterized by a plain, sober, practical exhibition of Scripture truth; the leading doctrines of that Gospel which he had so long preached appeared to have become stereotyped on his mind; there was the body of truth, the substance left, though the embellishment had disappeared. Still his services were eagerly sought after; he had acquired a popular name; and if his former brilliancy of mind was not exhibited, yet he retained the same rich savour of evangelical piety, the same fervent love to God, the same glowing compassion for perishing sinners: and these were his letters of commendation, which procured for him a hearty reception amongst the different Societies to whom his visits in the order of Providence were directed. He had not entered into retirement from choice, or because he was weary of labour; neither did he entertain any impression that former services had earned for him

hand the bitter cup, which he so cheerfully drank His religion was that of "love, peace, and joy;" it was indeed as one of his brethren in the ministry describes it, "a happy religion." He generally began his Band-meeting expressions with "Happy! happy! always happy!" Truly he lived very near heaven indeed.

In visiting the people, he was remarkable for being "instant in prayer." However short these visits, it would be exceedingly difficult to produce an instance of his leaving the house without praying with the family. In this particular, he trod in the steps of the Apostles, and the early Methodist Preachers. To pray appeared as natural to him as to breathe; the exercise was one, not so much of duty, as of delightful enjoyment. Whilst within the precincts of the Throne, he inhaled such a sweet and heavenly influence, that he seemed reluctant to retire from the spot where he held communion with his God; and his family well recollect how he would spend many hours in the day in his closet, in holy converse with the King of Heaven. When any of his Christian friends called in, to make their friendly inquiries concerning his health, he could not suffer them to depart until he had first made use of his interest in the courts above, by interceding for the Divine blessing to rest upon them and the members of their household. Three pious individuals called together upon him, one day, about

three years before his death: after some edifying conversation, he proposed that they should have a prayer-meeting. They consented; and he commenced by praying himself, and then called upon his three friends, one after another, until each had prayed. Then, instead of rising from their knees, as they expected to do, Mr. Casson commenced a second prayer; and when he had done, proceeded to call upon the three brethren by name, as before. They now concluded that surely their devotional exercises would come to a termination, especially as they began to feel some little inconvenience from having been so long in one position: but to him, the service of God was never "weariness or pain;" and as if feeling not the slightest inconvenience from remaining in a posture to which he was so much accustomed, he gave out his favourite verse,—

> "How blest are they, who still abide
> Close shelter'd in Thy bleeding side!
> Who life and strength from thence derive,
> And by thee move, and in thee live."

Invigorated anew, he resumed his work, and prayed yet again, with heavenly fervour: and, turning to the "brother" who was kneeling next to him, urged him to pray on, assuring him that it was a most delightful exercise, and that they could not be better employed. His good friend replied, "Yes, brother Casson, but we must go now;" at the same

time rising up, for the purpose of retiring. Mr. Casson seemed reluctant to give up, and appeared quite surprised that they should desire to go away when they were holding such a delightful meeting. The relation of an incident like this will doubtless recall to the recollection of his friends many similar seasons of hallowed communion with God, when with him they could sweetly sing,—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

It is painful to record, that the latter days of Mr. Casson, were, unhappily, also days of bitterness, strife, and agitation in the Wesleyan body. Into the particular merits of those questions, which disturbed and unsettled the minds of many, he neither had the inclination nor the ability to enter, from the enfeebled state of his mental powers. It appeared to him an inexplicable enigma, that there should be divisions in a church, which he had always been led to regard in the light of a family association. In the simplicity of his heart he had sincerely loved the people, as his brethren and sisters in the Lord; and was always ready to pray with them, to sympathize with them in their trials, and to serve them to the utmost of his ability. From his heart he could adopt the sentiments of

the Apostle, "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." He had studied well the description of the primitive church in New Testament times, and it was one of his favourite subjects, to expatiate on the glory of those halcyon days "when they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42.) He exercised no authority which his flock were disposed to regard as arbitrary, and he had no need to do it; for such was the mighty influence that he had acquired amongst them, through the all-conquering power of love, that he could have drawn them in any direction that he pleased. No one could have firmer hold of the hearts of the people, and they in return could place entire confidence in him. That there should be any departure from such a happy state of holy brotherhood, could not but be a painful reflection; though, from the cause already referred to, he was little prepared to enter into the minutiæ of these perplexing questions. But this was not the case with his excellent wife. To contemplate the havoc introduced into the church was too much for her sensitive mind, and her health gave way beneath the pressure of anxiety.

This introduces us to a mournful chapter in the history of this devoted servant of Christ. The

whole of the correspondence that has passed through the hands of his biographer bears decisive marks of his having been a happy man in the bosom of his family. As a husband and as a father, he cherished for the members of his own household a warm and endearing affection. Of Mrs. Casson, he seldom fails to introduce some record: for about twenty-six years she was his faithful companion, exhibiting the truth of Solomon's remark, that "a good wife is a gift from the Lord." A more suitable helpmate for him could scarcely have been found. Never was a wife more attentive to an afflicted husband: she met all his wishes in the kindest spirit,—assiduously watching over him with the greatest tenderness, and seldom allowing herself, during the days of his protracted affliction, to be long from his side. She possessed a well-cultivated mind, an amiable and gentle disposition, deep and sterling piety. She was highly esteemed in the different Circuits in which she had resided with her husband; and, as the wife of a Christian Minister, her uniform conversation was exemplary; she "was well reported of for good works," "in behaviour as becometh holiness." In Birstal she had the charge of two classes, and was greatly beloved, not only by the members, but by all who knew her. The affliction which eventually removed her from the church, and from the bosom of her family, stole upon her almost imperceptibly; but

the outward expression of the countenance indicated that some corroding influence was secretly preying within, and destroying the constitution. When the nature of the disease was discovered, a change of air was advised. It was fondly hoped that a visit to her daughter at Keighley, where she would have agreeable society, and all the care and nursing which her situation required and which filial duty and affection could supply, would be beneficial in re-invigorating her sinking frame. But all seemed to be in vain: the mind was crushed, and decay was sapping the foundation of the system. Her medical adviser, as a last resource, recommended her removal to York, to try the effect of a regular course of medical treatment. This had proved beneficial in similar cases, but in her case it was unavailing. In about a week after her removal thither the scene of suffering terminated, and

"Nature's last agony was o'er."

The day before her death she was quite sensible, and conversed freely with her daughter on family affairs. Her mind was kept in perfect peace, and she remarked that she should soon be in heaven. On her daughter reminding her that the Lord was her portion, she replied, "Yes, an abiding portion,—the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." In consequence of extreme physical exhaustion, she was not able to enter into much conversation, but

with a heavenly smile imprinted upon her countenance, and whilst her lips were moving as in the utterance of prayer, her redeemed spirit winged its flight to the realms of everlasting day. Her funeral sermon was preached at Birstal, by the Rev. James Scholes, from Rev. xiv. 13:—"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," &c. The chapel was crowded to excess, and very many lamented the loss of a dear and valued friend.

The shock was sudden and unexpected to the family; they had never entertained the belief that her sickness would so soon terminate in death; and, least of all, was it expected by her afflicted partner. He had fully calculated upon her recovery, and, on the preceding evening, at the family-altar, had brought her case specially before God in prayer, and had cheerfully conversed about her speedy return home. How to acquaint him with the news of "the stroke" that had taken away "the desire of his eyes," was a question of painful solicitude: in his enfeebled state, it was feared that the communication of his loss would be almost insupportable. The Rev. M. Cranswick was sent for in the morning, to prepare him to receive the sorrowful tidings. Mr. Casson was glad to see him, and they soon entered freely into profitable conversation. His friend reminded him that the children of God were called occasionally to pass through heavy trials; "Yes," replied Mr. Casson, "but grace is sufficient." It was

remarked again that sometimes the waters of sorrow were unusually deep, and some of the Divine dispensations were exceedingly distressing, and that, under peculiar circumstances, it required much grace to support the mind; and, whilst proceeding cautiously in this strain, Mr. Casson again interposed by observing, that whatever it was—however heavy—the grace of God was sufficient. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." "That's the promise!" he exclaimed. Mr. Cranswick was deeply affected by the piety and unsuspecting simplicity of his friend, and thought he might safely at once explain the object of his visit. He acquainted him with the loss he had sustained. As he listened, it occasioned a momentary surprise; a slight symptom of the recurrence of one of his fits appeared; then, with submission to his heavenly Father's will, whilst the tears were streaming down his cheeks, with a faltering voice he broke out in the exclamation of holy Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Never will that morning be forgotten by his sorrowful family. He spoke little: once he said, "It is like a dream;" and then, his breast struggling with inward emotion, he repeated again and again, "Thy will be done." The sustaining power of Divine grace, on which he had confidently relied, was communicated to him in this time of

special need, and God signally honoured that faith which he had exercised on his word. Under this severe trial, his whole demeanour was that of a ripe and mature Christian. Not a murmuring expression escaped his lips, but thanksgiving and praise ascended from an adoring heart. Accompanied by his son, he proceeded to York, to pay the last token of respect to the dearest object of his earthly affections. He was introduced into the room where

"Lovely in death, the beauteous ruin lay."

His son and he were left alone. He gazed wistfully on the countenance of the dear departed one, for some time, as though lost in thought and at length broke silence by turning to his son and saying, "Wesley, I think before next Christmas I shall be laid beside her. This was on the 21st of January, 1851. He saw her remains deposited in the cemetery at York, there to rest in hope: and, in the latter end of the November following, having fallen asleep in Jesus, *his* body was deposited in the same grave.

Leaving York, he returned to his solitary dwelling, to weep at the dissevering of those tenderest ties which linked him to earth, yet to rejoice in the hope of soon rejoining her glorified spirit in that happy land, where

"'Adieus' and 'farewells' are a sound unknown."

The latest conflict of the conquering hero awakens more than ordinary interest. There is something peculiarly striking in the sentiments of the immortal Hooker on this point: "The death of the saints of God is precious in *His* sight. And shall it seem superfluous to *us* to hear in what manner they ended their lives? The Lord himself hath not disdained so exactly to register in the book of life, after what sort his servants have closed up their days on earth, that he descendeth even to their very meanest actions,—what meat they have longed for in their sickness,—what they have spoken unto their children, kinsfolk, and friends, —where they have willed their dead carcasses to be laid,—how they have framed their wills and testaments; yea, the very turning of their faces to this side or that,—the setting of their eyes,—the degrees whereby their natural heat departed from them,— their cries, their groans, their pantings, breathings, and last gaspings,—he hath most solemnly commended unto the memory of all generations." And, doubtless, the numerous friends of the late Hodgson Casson will thank us for introducing them into the chamber where he conflicted with his latest foe, and would even rejoice to be detained yet a little longer there than it is in our power to keep them, to

"See the saint, to see his hold of heaven."

Mr. Casson had long been familiar with dying.

The sting of death had long since been drawn,—the grave was robbed of its victory. His eye of faith was often descrying the country on the other side of the river: he had a longing desire to be there; and often said, with calm simplicity, "I am packed up, and all ready."

About three weeks before his death, when no particular circumstances had as yet indicated that the termination of his earthly course was near, he received a friendly call from two esteemed young ladies, one of whom resided in his own neighbourhood, the other coming from some distance. They had known him well for many years, and felt a strong attachment to him. He was much pleased when they were introduced into his room, and conversed with them with his usual cheerfulness. Upon rising to take their departure, he said to them, as he had often done before to other friends who visited him, "But you must pray with me before you go." This invitation their natural diffidence and modesty led them to decline, at the same time assuring him they would be very glad if *he* would pray with *them*. He replied that he would do that, but that he felt a great desire for them to pray too. They entreated him to excuse them from attempting to perform such a duty, and said they would kneel down whilst he engaged in prayer. For a moment he appeared thoughtful, and then turning to the lady who had come from a distance, inquired when

she intended to return home. She replied, "In about three weeks." "Well now," said he, "when you hear that I am dead, and gone to heaven, you will feel sorry at not praying with the old man before you left, as he wished you." The appeal was irresistible: touched by the remark, and prompted by a gracious feeling, they yielded to his request, and all prayed together, whilst a hallowing influence rested upon them. On rising from prayer, the good man seemed much pleased; and, as he shook them cordially by the hand, with a countenance lit up with a heavenly smile, said, "Farewell! When you hear that the old man is dead, come and look at him in his coffin." The ladies took their leave, little suspecting that the time of his departure was at hand, and that, within the period which he had mentioned, they should again enter his dwelling, and look at him in his coffin, in accordance with his last request.

At the time when this little incident occurred, he was in his usual health, and continued so for a few days. He afterwards became gradually weaker and weaker, until "the weary wheels of life at last stood still." As he drew near the swellings of Jordan, the waters were calm and undisturbed; not a ripple appeared to agitate the surface,—but all was peace. There did not seem to be the ecstatic rapture which some dying saints have been favoured with in life's latest hour; but there was the calm-

ness and serenity of mind inspired by settled confidence in the Rock of his salvation. The weakness of his bodily frame was so extreme, that he could with great difficulty give utterance to what he felt, but his radiant countenance indicated the heaven within; and when he could collect a little strength, he employed it in prayer and praise.

The Rev. James Scholes calling to see him, inquired if he found the Lord to help. He replied, with considerable emphasis, "He has helped,—He will help,—He does help." And, on another occasion, when visited by the same Minister, upon his being asked what he should pray for, he faintly replied, "That the kingdom of God may spread, and that sinners may be saved." This was truly characteristic. For this great object he had lived, —for this he had preached and prayed,—and his dying wish was beautifully in unison with his devoted life.

On Sunday evening, November 23d, it was evident that his end was very near. His affectionate family gathered round the bed of their dying father. Though the power of articulation was gone, yet he gently pressed the hand of each, in token of recognition. His lips appeared moving, as though he was about "to enter heaven with prayer," and there was occasionally the lifting up of the hand, as if in rapture, until half-past eleven o'clock, when the silver cord was loosened, and he passed

away, to enjoy an eternal Sabbath in the paradise of God.

His funeral sermon was preached in the Wesleyan chapel, Birstal, by his old colleague and faithful friend, the Rev. John Bolam, from a text eminently descriptive of the character of the deceased:—"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." (Acts xi. 24.) Notwithstanding the shortness of the notice, crowds of people flocked together from every part of the Circuit, and from the adjacent district; thus manifesting the high respect they entertained for one, whose general character they so sincerely appreciated. It was indeed an impressive sight, to see within the walls of that spacious edifice, two thousand individuals assembled together, to pay their affectionate tribute of regard to departed worth. The season was marked with deep solemnity; and especially when the Minister was led out to expatiate on the excellencies of the deceased, his devoted piety,—his burning zeal,—his glowing compassion for souls,—illustrating these traits from his own personal knowledge of the midnight prayers which he had registered in heaven in their behalf. The emotions of the congregation were uncontrollable; tears flowed plentifully down almost every face; and the whole scene will long live in the memory of those who witnessed it.

Thus lived and died the lamented Hodgson Casson. To enter into any further delineation of his character would be superfluous. What he was in his closet, in his family, in the pulpit, in his ministerial labours, has already been brought out in the progress of these memoirs. Those who had the advantage of personal acquaintance, will readily acknowledge that his excellencies have not been magnified; whilst those who may have formed their sentiments concerning him, from exaggerated reports of his eccentricities, may be confidently referred to the living witnesses who yet survive in every Circuit in which he laboured, who with one voice will be found ready to attest their conviction of his superior worth. No hesitation is needed in saying, "Those who knew him best loved him most." That he had his failings we cannot deny: "to err is human." But whatever his judgment failed to correct, is abundantly outweighed by his many excellencies. His record is on high; and he is now passed beyond the reach of human praise or censure. Released from the protracted sufferings incident to this vale of tears, his happy spirit has rejoined his former associates, Thompson, and Mann, and Rawson, and Ellidge, and a triumphant host who had crossed the Jordan of death before him, and were ready to hail his arrival on the shores of bliss.